CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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G RAM G bill will burden K'taka with ₹25,000 cr: CM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah warned that the Centre's 60:40 MGNREGA funding change will burden Karnataka with ₹25,000 crore

BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has expressed serious concern over the Centre's changes to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), saying the revised 60:40 funding pattern would impose an additional financial burden of nearly ₹25,000 crore on Karnataka. Speaking at the Congress Foundation Day programme held at the KPCC office in Bengaluru, he said the party had played a decisive role in shaping modern India, while accusing the BJP of contributing little to national development.

Siddaramaiah said any transformation India has achieved is largely because of the Congress, which he credited with strengthening democracy, social justice and equal opportunity. He recalled that the Constitution ensured equal rights to all citizens and noted that India remains the world's largest democracy due to these values. He also highlighted the Congress' historic contribution to the freedom struggle, recalling major movements such as the Non-Cooperation Movement and Quit India Movement.

Targeting the RSS and Jana Sangh, Siddaramaiah alleged that they neither participated in the freedom struggle nor supported India's independence. He accused them of glorifying divisive politics and attempting to undermine Gandhian ideals, while claiming that modern India's foundation was laid by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Reiterating pride in Congress' legacy, he said the party not only secured independence but also initiated social reforms, agricultural empowerment and food security that shaped the nation's progress.

CM credits Cong for driving major social reforms

The Congress introduced several initiatives aimed at reducing inequality, and under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and Manmohan Singh, many welfare schemes were elevated to the status of fundamental rights. It was the Congress, not the BJP, that brought in RTI and RTE. Now, attempts are being made to rename the "Right to Work NREGA" scheme, he alleged.

Criticising what he called excessive hostility, he said that even after Gandhi's assassination, hatred has not subsided. Whether they dislike Nehru, Gandhi, Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi — or even him — it does not matter, he said.

> **"If the nation has changed, Congress made it; BJP is ruining MGNREGA and burdening Karnataka with twenty five thousand crores"**
> —Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

What is the G RAM G bill?

- G RAM G takes over the MNREGA's role of creating statutory job guarantees – the minimum being 125 man-days of work – per rural household.
- Jobs are to be created by the respective states each of which will now share the wage burden – a 40:60 split – with the Centre.
- And an allowance is to be paid – funded fully by the state – if no job is made available within 15 days of it being sought.
- G RAM G offers an increased minimum number – 125 over 100 by MNREGA, with conditions applied.

BSF, Police reject claim on Hadi killers entering India

GUWAHATI

Meghalaya Police have denied Bangladeshi media reports alleging that two suspects in the killing of student leader Sharif Osman Hadi escaped into the northeastern state. Authorities also dismissed claims that two individuals who allegedly assisted the fugitives had been arrested in Meghalaya.

Reports quoting a senior official, said that suspects Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh crossed into Meghalaya with local support. According to the report, the suspects allegedly entered India through the Haluaghat border, were received by a man named Purti, and later taken to Tura by a taxi driver identified as Sami. The newspaper further stated that both Purti and Sami had been detained, claims echoed by other media outlets.

However, Meghalaya Director General of Police Idashisha Nongrang clarified that no arrests had been made. Another senior police officer said the state police have not received any official or unofficial communication from Bangladeshi authorities regarding the matter.

The BSF also rejected the reports, stating that internal verification confirmed the claims were "completely false." A senior BSF official added that due to the demographic nature of the Meghalaya–Bangladesh border, outsiders are easily noticeable and locals have often helped identify such individuals.

> "Neither Purti nor Sami has been identified, traced or arrested anywhere in Meghalaya. The narrative appears to have been constructed without verification or coordination with Indian authorities," the PHQ official said.

> Backing the police stance, BSF Inspector General OP Upadhayay firmly rejected reports. He said there is no evidence or report of such an incident, calling the claims baseless and misleading, and added that the BSF works strictly on verified intelligence.

Jairam Ramesh claims Aravalli redefinition will fragment it

NEW DELHI

Amid a growing row over the redefinition of the Aravalli Hills, Congress leader and general secretary Jairam Ramesh on Sunday questioned Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, claiming the move would fragment and undermine the geographical and ecological integrity of the ancient mountain range.

In a detailed letter to the Minister, Mr. Ramesh said there were widespread concerns over redefining the Aravallis by restricting them to landforms with an elevation of 100 metres or more. He posed four specific questions, arguing that the proposed definition departs sharply from the scientific criteria followed for over a decade.

Mr. Ramesh pointed out that since 2012, the definition of the Aravalli Hills in Rajasthan had been based on a Forest Survey of India (FSI) report dated August 28, 2010. That report, he said, classified hills not merely by height but also by slope, buffer zones and the inclusion of flat areas, valleys and depressions within delineated regions. Mr. Ramesh also referred to a November 7, 2025 report of the Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee, which found that 164 mining leases in Rajasthan fell within the Aravalli Hills as defined under the earlier FSI criteria.

सगर
की बेल
रद्द करो
REVOKE

Unnao Rape case: SC to hear CBI plea against Sengar today

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will on December 29 hear a plea filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) challenging a Delhi High Court order that suspended the life sentence of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the 2017 Unnao rape case.

As per the apex court's cause list, a Bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Augustine George Masih is scheduled to take up the matter. Apart from the CBI's petition, the court will also hear a separate plea filed by advocates Anjale Patel and Pooja Shilpkar opposing the High Court's decision.

Unnao rape victim, family protest at Jantar Mantar

The survivor of the 2017 Unnao rape case, along with her family and activists, staged a protest at Jantar Mantar on Sunday against the Delhi High Court's order suspending former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar's life sentence. Demanding stricter accountability, the victim sought enhanced security for her family, citing threats and harassment.

Pak prez advised to 'hide in a bunker' during Op Sindoor

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has disclosed that he was advised by his Military Secretary to take shelter in a bunker during the four-day military confrontation with India in May, but he chose to stay put, underscoring the level of alarm within Pakistan's top leadership during India's Operation Sindoor.

Speaking at a public event on Saturday, Zardari said his Military Secretary approached him after Indian strikes began, urging him to move to a bunker for safety. "He told me the war had started and suggested we go to the bunkers. I refused. If martyrdom is destined, it will happen here. Leaders do not die in bunkers," Zardari said. He also claimed he had anticipated the conflict several days in advance.

Zardari's remarks, however, were questioned by Indian military veterans. Retired Lieutenant General KJS Dhillon said Pakistan's political and military leadership had in fact taken shelter during the conflict. "Even the army chief was inside a bunker. Only the soldiers were exposed. If they truly knew four days in advance, they failed to stop even a single missile from hitting its targets," he said.

Operation Sindoor was launched by India on May 7 following the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, that killed 26 civilians. Indian forces carried out precision strikes on terror camps and military infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, destroying several facilities and eliminating a large number of terrorists. Pakistan attempted to retaliate with missile and drone attacks on Indian cities, most of which were intercepted, prompting further Indian strikes on key Pakistani installations.

The escalation ended on May 10 after Pakistan proposed a ceasefire, which India accepted.

KPCC forms committee to study student elections

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has set up a high-level committee to study the process, structure, and framework for conducting student union elections in the state, aiming to nurture leadership qualities among students from the grassroots.

KPCC President D.K. Shivakumar issued an order appointing the convenor and members of the committee, formed based on feedback from party leaders and workers advocating for student elections. Dr. Sharanprakash R. Patil, Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Livelihood, and Raichur District In-Charge, has been named as the convenor.

Other members include Higher Education Minister Dr. M.C. Sudhakar, Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed, MLAs Rizwan Arshad and B. Shivanna, Legislative Council members Puttanna, Basavanagouda Badarli, H.S. Manjunath, and KPCC leader Kirti Ganesh.

The committee has been tasked with examining various aspects, including the timing of elections, facilitators and obstacles, election procedures, transparency, and conducting polls in a politically neutral manner. It has been instructed to complete the study and submit its report within fifteen days.

PRESIDENTIAL MARITIME MILESTONE

Murmu undertakes submarine sortie at Karwar Naval Base

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday undertook a submarine sortie at the Indian Navy's Kadamba Naval Base in Karwar, becoming only the second President of India to experience an underwater voyage aboard a naval submarine.

The President sailed on INS Vaghsheer, an indigenous Kalvari-class submarine, marking a rare and symbolic moment that underscored the growing strength of India's maritime capabilities.

Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the first to undertake a submarine sortie, sailing from Visakhapatnam on Feb 13, 2006.

Accompanied by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi and Flag Officer Commanding Karnataka Naval Area Rear Admiral Vikram Menon, President Murmu interacted with senior naval officers and crew members during the sortie. As the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, she later greeted officers present at the base.

President Murmu arrived at the Kadamba Naval Base by helicopter from Goa airport and was received by Karnataka Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot. Several senior civil and police officials, including Fisheries Minister Mankala Vaidya, were present during her visit.

INS Vaghsheer is the sixth and final submarine of Project 75 and was commissioned into the Indian Navy earlier this year. The Kalvari-class Scorpène diesel-electric attack submarine has been built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited in collaboration with France's Naval Group.

QUICK READ

K'taka HM refutes claims of ₹58 cr drug seizure

BENGALURU: Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwar has dismissed reports that Maharashtra police seized drugs worth ₹58 crore in Bengaluru, calling them far from the truth. He clarified that the actual seizure involved around four kilograms of mephedrone, valued at approximately ₹1.2 crore. Dr. Parameshwar said the operation was a joint effort involving Bengaluru City Police.

➔ *More on page 2*

Aviation ministry launches 24x7 passenger helpline

NEWDELHI: To address air travellers' grievances more promptly, the civil aviation ministry has set up the Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR) that functions round-the-clock to resolve the issues. Officials from the ministry, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), airlines and Airports Authority of India (AAI), are among those working at the centre, which monitors operations, attends to passenger calls and coordinates real-time assistance.

QUICK READ

Father, son killed in road accident

Bengaluru

A father-son duo died on the spot after a road accident took place between a canter and a bike on NICE Road. The father and son who were on the bike died on the spot in the accident. The deceased have been identified as Mallesh (54) and his son Naveen (26), both residents of Bukkapatna village in Sira taluk. The canter driver fled the scene leaving the vehicle at the spot when the accident occurred. Traffic was disrupted on NICE Road for some time. A case has been registered at Nelamangala traffic police station and the police are investigating.

BMTC driver assaulted in the middle of road

Bengaluru

BMTC bus driver was assaulted by a man in the middle of the road for touching the car. The bus was going to KR Market from Yelahanka and there was a heated argument between the two. Later, the BMTC driver was attacked by the car driver in the middle of the road. The incident took place near the Ashwath Nagar bus stand. The public were mute spectators for the incident. As a result there was a traffic jam on the main road for nearly one hour, till the police arrived at the scene and controlled the situation.

Minors create disturbance, attempt theft in Yelahanka

Bengaluru

In Yelahanka's Sahakarnagar area, a group of minors intercepted a delivery boy, creating a commotion. Claiming that the delivery boy had damaged a car, they demanded compensation. When he refused to pay, the group attempted to snatch his bike, mobile phone, and the food he was delivering. Sensing the situation escalating, the delivery boy tried to call the police. On hearing this, the minors fled the scene in fear, leaving the delivery boy unharmed. Authorities have been informed, and the incident highlights growing concerns over the involvement of minors in street-level harassment and theft attempts.

Claims of ₹55 cr drugs seized in city far from truth: Min

Karnataka Home Minister Dr. Parameshwar refutes ₹58 crore Bengaluru drugs claim, clarifying actual seizure valued at ₹1.2 crore

Continued *from page 1*

Maharashtra police have claimed that they seized drugs worth ₹58 crore in Bengaluru. However, Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwar stated that this information is far from the truth.

Dr. G. Parameshwar informed that Maharashtra's Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ATNF), along with Bengaluru City Police, NCB officials, and SOCO (Scene of Crime Officers) teams, conducted a raid in Bengaluru.

Ahead of the New Year celebrations, he held a meeting with senior police officials at the Police Commissioner's office to discuss preventive measures, proper deployment, and security arrangements in the city.

Since October and November, police across the state have stepped up operations against drug trafficking. Maharashtra police acted based on intelligence from a suspect in Mumbai, leading to the arrest of a person in Bengaluru. The joint operation involved Bengaluru City Police, Mumbai Police, NCB, and SOCO teams. The suspect had stored mephedrone, a chemical used in drug preparation. Dr. Parameshwar clarified that claims suggesting Bengaluru police took no action are false.

The seized chemicals are valued at ₹30 lakh per kg, totaling around ₹1.2 crore for four kilograms. Authorities have been instructed to work cautiously following the Mysuru incident. The city police have been monitoring drug peddlers for three months and are taking action against their networks.

He added that police often act on intelligence from suspects to conduct operations in other states. Allegations of multiple drug factories are false. During the operation, Deputy Commissioners coordinated with Mumbai police, reflecting a nationally organized fight against drug trafficking.

Dr. Parameshwar emphasized that such incidents must not recur in Bengaluru, warning that strict action will be taken against any negligent officer, whether DCP, ACP, or local authority, along with other measures beyond mere seizure.

Liquor sales permitted from 6 am to 1 am on Dec 31

BENGALURU

In view of the New Year celebrations, the City Police Commissioner has ordered that special occasional excise licensees (CL-5) be allowed to trade and consume alcohol from 6 am to 1 am on December 31, applicable to city.

CL-5 licensees were allowed to trade in liquor only from 10.30 am to 12 midnight on normal days. However, on December 31, for the New Year celebrations, they have been allowed to trade in liquor from 6 am to 1 am.

A CL-5 is a temporary 24 hour liquor license that allows the consumption of alcohol on special occasions. This license primarily allows the sale or supply of alcohol to private parties, functions held on specific days. Holders of this license are usually only allowed to sell alcohol on one day during special occasions, such as New Year's.

CL-5 licensees must also purchase and sell liquor as per Excise Department rules. Selling or consuming liquor at special occasions without a CL-5 license is a crime under the law.

Preparations for the New Year in Bengaluru: In view of the celebrations to be held in the capital, the police have made all kinds of preparations. At the same time, they have also launched a campaign to celebrate responsibly.

Appropriate preparations are being made as a precautionary measure to prevent any untoward incidents during the celebrations. Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, who has started a campaign to celebrate the New Year responsibly online, has taken steps to curb drug parties and rave parties.

The police department, which has started a campaign on social media to celebrate responsibility, has given some instructions to the people. It has also launched a campaign on passenger safety and is sharing information about emergency technology in Uber and Ola taxis.

> City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, who recently held a meeting with the heads of Ola and Uber, had received information about security and other issues.

30-year-old Techie honey trapped via dating app, five arrested

BENGALURU

A 30-year-old software professional searching for a partner through a dating app was allegedly duped and assaulted in a two-stage honeytrap incident in RR Nagar. Based on the complaint filed, police arrested Sumalata alias Anjali (28), Harshini alias Sweety (26) and their associates Jagadish alias Jagga (35), Manju alias Manjunath (30) and Lokesh Kumar (32), residents of RR Nagar and Annapoorneshwarinagar. They were remanded to judicial custody at Bengaluru central prison.

According to complainant, he first met Sumalata through 'Fun with Benefits Escort Group' on the Telegram app on December 1. I was invited to her Annapoorneshwarinagar home on the night of December 10. When I was inside, she grabbed Rs 20,000 in cash and my mobile and demanded Rs 1 lakh. Also, she threatened to call her associates and beat me up. I grabbed my phone and ran away, he said in his complaint.

Meanwhile, on December 20 morning, he received a message on Telegram from Sweety, saying she was ready to meet him. Accordingly, he went to RR Nagar around 1.45pm to meet her.

Little did the complainant know that Sweety was Sumalata's friend. I was walking near a temple in RR Nagar when five persons, including two women, one of them Sumalata, blocked me and snatched Rs 20,000 I was carrying. They beat me up and demanded Rs 1 lakh. I shouted, and passersby called the police control room, read the complaint.

As a patrolling Hoysala police vehicle reached the spot, all five ran away. Based on the complaint filed by the victim, we traced and arrested the accused persons, an investigating officer said.

Karti Chidambaram slams Infosys over land sale

BENGALURU

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram and others have expressed outrage over Infosys, which is facing allegations of selling land received from KIADB for industrial purposes to a real estate company, and have demanded that the land and money be returned to the state government immediately. It has been alleged that 53.5 acres of land, which was allotted to Infosys by KIADB many years ago in Attibele hobli of Anekal taluk, has been agreed to be sold to a real estate company for Rs 250 crore. MP on social media, said that if land is acquired at a concessional rate for a specific purpose, but the land is not used for that purpose.

KETRA appeals govt to resume safaris in Bandipur, Nagarahole

BENGALURU

Ecotourism resort owners have written to Tourism Minister HK Patil, seeking the immediate withdrawal of the blanket ban on safaris in Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves, warning that continued closure could cripple the sector.

The Karnataka Ecotourism Resorts Association (KETRA) stated there is no scientific study establishing a connection between regulated safari tourism and recent human deaths caused by tiger attacks.

According to KETRA, safari areas in Nagarahole are completely disconnected from locations where conflict incidents occurred, while safari routes in Bandipur are situated nearly 50–100 km away from the affected regions.

The association estimated that the state is losing around Rs 60–70 lakh per day in GST revenue due to the suspension, adding pressure on government finances.

KETRA members are collectively losing over Rs 3 crore a day because of mass cancellations, while Jungle Lodges and Resorts are incurring losses of nearly Rs 30 lakh daily.

The forest department is also bearing the brunt of the ban, with daily losses of about Rs 30 lakh in safari fees since operations were halted.

The ecotourism sector employs around 8,000 people, nearly 80 percent of them from local villages and indigenous tribal communities, whose livelihoods are now under threat due to the prolonged suspension.

My brother was scared and apologetic after wife's death: Suraj's brother reacts

BENGALURU

Shocked by his wife's suicide two days ago, hounded by public sentiment and charged with dowry harassment and abetment to suicide, a 30-year-old Bengaluru resident died by suicide in a Nagpur hotel early Saturday after undertaking a 1,000km circuitous road journey along with his family members.

Suraj Shivanna, a franchise owner of an online delivery service, and his family fled Bengaluru on December 25, and after a brief stopover in Hyderabad, reached Nagpur on Friday evening. They checked into their two rooms in a hotel around 9.30 pm.

Suraj was found hanging in the hotel room by his 60-year-old mother, Jayanti, around 12.30am. Shattered to see her son dead, she too attempted to hang herself.

She, however, survived as the noose snapped, and her cries alerted the hotel staff and other family members. Her elder son, Sanjay Shivanna, 36, lodged a police report. Suraj was taken to AIIMS-Nagpur, where doctors confirmed his death. Sanjay, a businessman based in Bengaluru, told police the family was forced to flee due to escalating threats from Suraj's in-laws following the suicide of his wife, Ganavi.

Around 30 people stormed our house searching for Suraj, who was named in an FIR for dowry harassment. We were traumatised and in fear, said Sanjay.

Suraj had married Ganavi, an MBA graduate, on October 29. Family sources revealed Ganavi was reportedly reluctant as she was pressured into the union by her aunt. The couple went on a 10-day honeymoon to Sri Lanka, but the trip turned sour as revelations about Ganavi's pre-marital friendship surfaced, leading to heated arguments, said family sources. The couple returned to Bengaluru after five days. On their return, attempts by family, including Sanjay, to mediate failed. Ganavi left for her father's home and hours later, hanged herself, following which her family lodged a complaint against Suraj and his relatives of torturing her for dowry.

Reacting to the allegations, Sanjay denied the dowry allegations. We did not make any demands. We covered all wedding expenses. It's shocking on their part to hurl such allegations. Instead, Ganavi's family had started issuing death threats to us. My brother was scared and apologetic, Sanjay said, referring to Suraj's in-laws' visit to their home on December 22. Suraj's autopsy report is awaited.

RECITATION RECORD

Over 4,000 recite Ayurveda chapter, sets record

BENGALURU

More than 4,000 people simultaneously recited the 'Ashtanga Hridaya Samhita Dinacharya Adhyaya', which holds a great place in Ayurveda, creating a record in the Indian Books of Records and the Asia Books of Records. Ayurvedic experts, students and dignitaries recited this chapter on the main stage on the 3rd day of the Second Ayurveda World Conference being held at the Palace Grounds.

ASIA BOOK OF RECORDS

The first record in Ayurveda was created by reciting the Dinacharya at the same time by thousands of voices.

Asia Book of Records jury member Harish R. announced the record. He said that this record has been created in the name of Prashanti Ayurveda Center and presented a certificate and medal to Dr Giridhar Kaje. This is the first record in the field of Ayurveda, said Dr Giridhar Kaje, the founder of the conference.

The Ashtanga Hridaya Samhita was written by Maharishi Vagbhatacharya, and the daily routine chapter is a chapter that tells what kind of daily routine every person should create according to time and country.

Speaking on the third of second Ayurveda World Conference, Senior Journalist Ravi Hegde said, there is enough misinformation that there is no science in Ayurveda, that it is not a medical science.

If the data of many years of success in the field of Ayurveda, treatment statistics and other factors are added to artificial intelligence, it can be shown that there is a lot of science hidden in Ayurveda, he said.

KSDL to prioritise Kannadigas in 96–97% of vacancies: Nadagowda

BENGALURU

Muddebihal MLA and KSDL president Appaji Nadagowda has said that 96-97 per cent of the vacancies in KSDL will be filled by Kannadigas.

He was presiding over the 70th Kannada Rajyotsava programme held at KSDL's Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar Auditorium.

However, in recent times, it has recovered and made strides towards profitability. He said that all this is due to the sacrifice of everyone working here. Appaji Nadagowda said that Mysuru Sandal Soap is a proud product of Kannadigas and appealed to everyone to use this soap.

Earlier, Kannada activist and filmmaker Sa. Ra. Govindu said, Kannadigas are yet to get full priority in Kannada Nadu. Politicians are responsible for all this. He said that the government should adopt a two-language policy instead of the three-language formula in our country. Speaking on the occasion, another guest and Sandalwood actor Komal said that KSDL is like a lamp that never goes out.

QUICK READ

Autorickshaw Overturns into Drain, Woman Injured

SULLIA

A harrowing incident occurred on the Gandhinagar–Aletti road near Gurumpu, Sullia, when an autorickshaw overturned into a roadside drain while attempting to avoid a pothole. The driver, Anand, lost control of the vehicle after swerving to avoid a collision, resulting in the autorickshaw toppling into the drain.A woman passenger was injured in the accident and received medical treatment. Fortunately, the driver, Anand, escaped with minor injuries. The autorickshaw suffered significant damage in the mishap.The incident highlights the poor condition of the road, which has been plagued by potholes. Locals have been demanding repairs and maintenance to prevent such accidents. The deep apathy of the authorities concerned despite repeated request to upgrade road infrastructure has disheartened the locals.

President Murmu Receives Warm Welcome at Karwar Naval Base

KARWAR

President Droupadi Murmu arrived at the Kadamba Naval Base in Karwar, Karnataka, on Monday, where she was accorded a warm reception. Karnataka Governor Thawarchand Gehlot and Fisheries, Ports and Inland Water Transport Minister Mankal S. Vaidya welcomed the President, alongside Belagavi divisional commissioner Jayanti and Uttara Kannada deputy commissioner K. Lakshmipriya.Senior police officials, including Additional Director General of Police Hithendra, Inspector General of Police Amit Singh, and Uttara Kannada Superintendent of Police Deepan M. N., were also present. Rear Admiral Vikram Menon of the Karwar Naval Base, along with other senior Indian Navy officers, welcomed the President on her arrival. During her visit, President Murmu also embarked on a submarine sortie onboard INS Vaghsheer, becoming the second Indian President to experience an operational submarine voyage.

Wild Boar Attacks Motorcycle, Rider Injured

BELTHANGADY

A motorcyclist was seriously injured after a wild boar suddenly charged onto the road and attacked his vehicle at BelajeAlekki in Lail village, Beltangady. Sukesh, a resident of Kudeelu in Nada village, was returning home from work at a motorcycle showroom in Beltangady when the incident occurred around 8:45 pm.Sukesh suffered serious injuries and was admitted to a hospital in Mangaluru. The motorcycle was also damaged in the attack. Local authorities, including Laila gram panchayat member Prasad Shetty Eninje and officials from the Beltangady range of the forest department, visited the spot and conducted an inspection. The incident has raised concerns about the increasing human-wildlife conflict in the area. Authorities are expected to take measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

Mangaluru Emerges as Cost-Effective Hub for Next-Gen Data Centres

With land lease rates averaging ₹ 7.69 per sq ft per month, Mangaluru offers a cost advantage of 4 to 5 times compared to Mumbai & up to 95% savings over Chennai, depending on location & asset type

MANGALURU

The City has been identified as one of India's most cost-efficient and scalable locations for next-generation data centres, according to the Mangaluru Data Centre Feasibility Study 2025. The study, released by the Karnataka Digital Economy Mission (KDEM) and the Silicon Beach Program (SBP) in collaboration with Deloitte India, highlights the city's strong economic and operational advantages.

With land lease rates averaging Rs 7.69 per sq ft per month, Mangaluru offers a cost advantage of four to five times compared to Mumbai and up to 95% savings over Chennai, depending on location and asset type. Power tariffs ranging between Rs 5.95 and Rs 6.60 per kWh further strengthen Mangaluru's competitiveness, undercutting Chennai's average tariff of Rs 7.50 per kWh and remaining lower than most major data centre markets in the country.

The study also points to high grid reliability and assured industrial water availability as key enablers for large-scale data centre operations, creating a stable foundation for future-ready digital infrastructure. With India projected to reach 10-12 GW of national data centre capacity by 2030, Mangaluru is poised to play a strategic role in supporting the country's growing demand for cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and mission-critical digital infrastructure. KDEM chairman B V Naidu emphasized that Mangaluru offers an optimal mix of affordability, reliability, and capability, making it well-suited to host mission-critical workloads while complementing Bengaluru's role as India's primary digital hub. Rohith Bhat, lead industry anchor for the Mangaluru cluster at KDEM, highlighted the city's steady development of core elements required for a large-scale data centre ecosystem, including coastal geography, stable power supply, skilled talent availability, and strong multimodal connectivity.

KCOCA Invoked Against 6 Accused in Saifuddin Murder Case

UDUPI

The Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (KCOCA) has been invoked against six accused, including an absconding prime accused, in connection with the murder of Saifuddin in Kodavoor village under the Malpe Police Station limits.

According to Udupi district superintendent of police Hariram Shankar, the accused had lured Saifuddin, a bus operator, to leave his house with Faizal Khan under the pretext of discussing bus business in Mangaluru. Between 10:15 am and 11:30 am, Faizal Khan, Sharif, and others allegedly murdered Saifuddin at a house near Nagabana in Kodavoor village.

The police arrested Mohammed Faisal Khan (27), Mohammed Sharif (37), and Abdul Shukoor (43) on September 28, 2025. Ridha Shabana (27), who allegedly conspired and participated in the crime, was arrested on October 4, 2025, and Mali Mohammed Siyan (31), who supplied weapons, was arrested on December 15, 2025.

The investigation is ongoing, with efforts to trace and apprehend the absconding prime accused, believed to be abroad.

BYV praises MP Chowta's 'Back to Ooru' vision

MANGALURU

BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra on Sunday lauded Dakshina Kannada MP Capt. Brijesh Chowta's "Back to Ooru" (Back to the Native Place) initiative, describing it as a unique and forward-looking concept that encourages Mangaluru's global talent pool to return home and contribute to the region's development. Speaking at the ninth edition of the New Year Kambala organised under the leadership of Capt. Chowta at the Ram–Lakshman twin track arena in Goldfinch City, Bangrakuloor, Vijayendra said Kambala was far more than a rural folk sport. "Kambala symbolises the cultural identity and pride of Tulu Nadu. Bringing this rural tradition into an urban setting and giving it an organised platform has helped connect the younger generation with its roots," he said. Vijayendra particularly appreciated the decision to honour successful entrepreneurs of coastal Karnataka who had returned from across India and abroad to set up enterprises in their homeland. Recognising such achievers on a Kambala stage, he said, sent out a powerful message and served as a model for other regions. He also commended Capt. Chowta for systematically organising the Mangaluru Kambala over the past eight years, which, he noted, had played a significant role in popularising the sport beyond rural areas.

Addressing the gathering, Capt. Brijesh Chowta said the objective of organising Kambala was to pass on Tulu Nadu's art, culture and identity to future generations. He added that this year's edition had been made more meaningful through new initiatives such as programmes on national awareness and the "Back to Ooru" campaign.

As part of the initiative, 10 entrepreneurs who had returned to their native region and created employment opportunities were felicitated. Those honoured included Anand Fernandes of Ezy Company; Nitin Ratnakar, executive director of MIR Group; Bruno Marcel Prakash Pereira of iTagg Energietechnik Pvt. Ltd.; chef and entrepreneur Shreya Shetty; Agrileaf founder Avinash Rao; Smita Rao of Industrial Automation and Digital Technologies; Namita P.P. of Bosch Professionals' India R&D Centre, Mangaluru; Sandesh D. Poojary of DNet Services Pvt. Ltd.; Sudhakar Poonja of S.N. Poonja & Co.; and Ansari Ali of Independent Innovation.

Mangaluru Police Officer Attempts Suicide by Setting Himself Ablaze

MANGALURU

An Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) attached to the Pandeshwar Police Station in Mangaluru, Harishchandra Berike, attempted suicide by setting himself on fire at his residence in Vyasanagar, Kadri limits, on Sunday morning. Berike, a native of Mulleria in Kasaragod district of Kerala, is currently undergoing treatment at AJ Hospital.

According to eyewitnesses, Berike was seen plucking flowers for worship earlier in the morning. However, around 10:30 am, neighbours heard screams coming from his house and rushed to the spot to find him engulfed in flames. They immediately doused the fire and shifted him to the hospital.

The incident occurred while his wife and children were away in their native place due to holidays. The exact reason behind the suicide attempt is still unknown. Kadri police have visited the scene and are conducting further investigation into the incident.

The police officer's condition and the circumstances surrounding the incident are currently unclear, and authorities are working to determine the cause of this tragic event.

Local residents are shocked by the incident, and an air of uncertainty prevails in the area as the investigation continues,leaving everyone awaiting updates on his condition.

Woman's Legacy Lives On: Mother's Selfless Act Saves Lives

SULLIA

A poignant moment of triumph and tragedy unfolded in Sullia, where a young woman's untimely passing led to a remarkable act of generosity, touching the lives of many. Sindhu, a 22-year-old from Rathabeedi, Sullia, who worked at a private co-operative society in Puttur, succumbed to a brain haemorrhage, leaving behind her mother and sister.

Sindhu's ordeal began on December 16, when she slipped from her seat on a bus near Adkar while returning to Sullia from Puttur. Rushed to Sullia Government Hospital and later shifted to a private hospital, she underwent surgery for neurological complications. Despite a brief period of consciousness, her brain became non-functional, and she fell into a coma.

In a testament to her mother's strength and compassion, Mamatha made the courageous decision to donate Sindhu's organs, saying it would help save other lives. Her heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, and eyes were donated to hospitals in Mangaluru and Apollo Hospital, Mysuru. The organ donation process was a well-coordinated effort, with ambulance drivers clearing the route to ensure swift transportation. Mamatha, a daily wage worker, has been praised for her selfless act, with many hailing her as a symbol of courage and humanity. Sindhu's story is a reminder of the impact one person can have on others and their lives.

Electrification Completed On Ghat Route

MANGALURU

The South Western Railway has successfully completed electrification of the Sakleshpur–Subramanya Road Ghat Section under the Mysuru Division, with an electric locomotive trial conducted on December 28, 2025. The completion of the project is being hailed as a major engineering accomplishment in difficult terrain.

Stretching over 55 km, the Ghat Section is one of the most complex rail corridors in the country, characterised by steep inclines, sharp curves and numerous tunnels and bridges. The route includes 57 tunnels, 258 bridges and gradients as steep as 1 in 50, making electrification a highly challenging task.

The electrification work began in December 2023 and was completed at an estimated cost of ₹93.55 crore. As part of the project, five switching stations were constructed and overhead equipment was installed throughout the section. The system has been engineered to support train speeds of up to 120 kmph while maintaining stringent safety standards.

Railway authorities said special engineering solutions were required inside tunnels, where 419 main and 419 spare brackets were installed to support overhead equipment. Geological assessments were conducted by expert institutions, including the National Institute of Rock Mechanics and Bangalore University, to ensure structural stability. Pull-out tests at every installation point ensured long-term safety.

Execution was further complicated by heavy monsoons, landslides, soil erosion and limited accessibility in the hilly terrain. Materials often had to be transported by rail due to the absence of road connectivity. Moreover, strict operational conditions imposed by the Commissioner of Railway Safety during the project demanded meticulous planning to ensure uninterrupted train services.

World Konkani Centre, Chaptagar Community Organise Scholarship Distribution and 'Vikas–2025' Skill Training Programme

MANGALURU:

With the objective of supporting education and enhancing employability among students of the Chaptagar community, the Dakshina Kannada District Chaptagar Samaj Sudharak Sangha (Regd.), Mangaluru, in collaboration with the World Konkani Centre, Shaktinagar, organised a scholarship distribution ceremony and the inaugural programme of the pre-skill training initiative titled "Vikas–2025" here today Under the 'Vidyakalpaka' scholarship fund, scholarships amounting to nearly ₹5 lakh were distributed to around 50 students pursuing higher education in various disciplines. The programme aimed at providing both financial assistance and holistic skill development to students, enabling them to face academic and professional challenges with confidence.

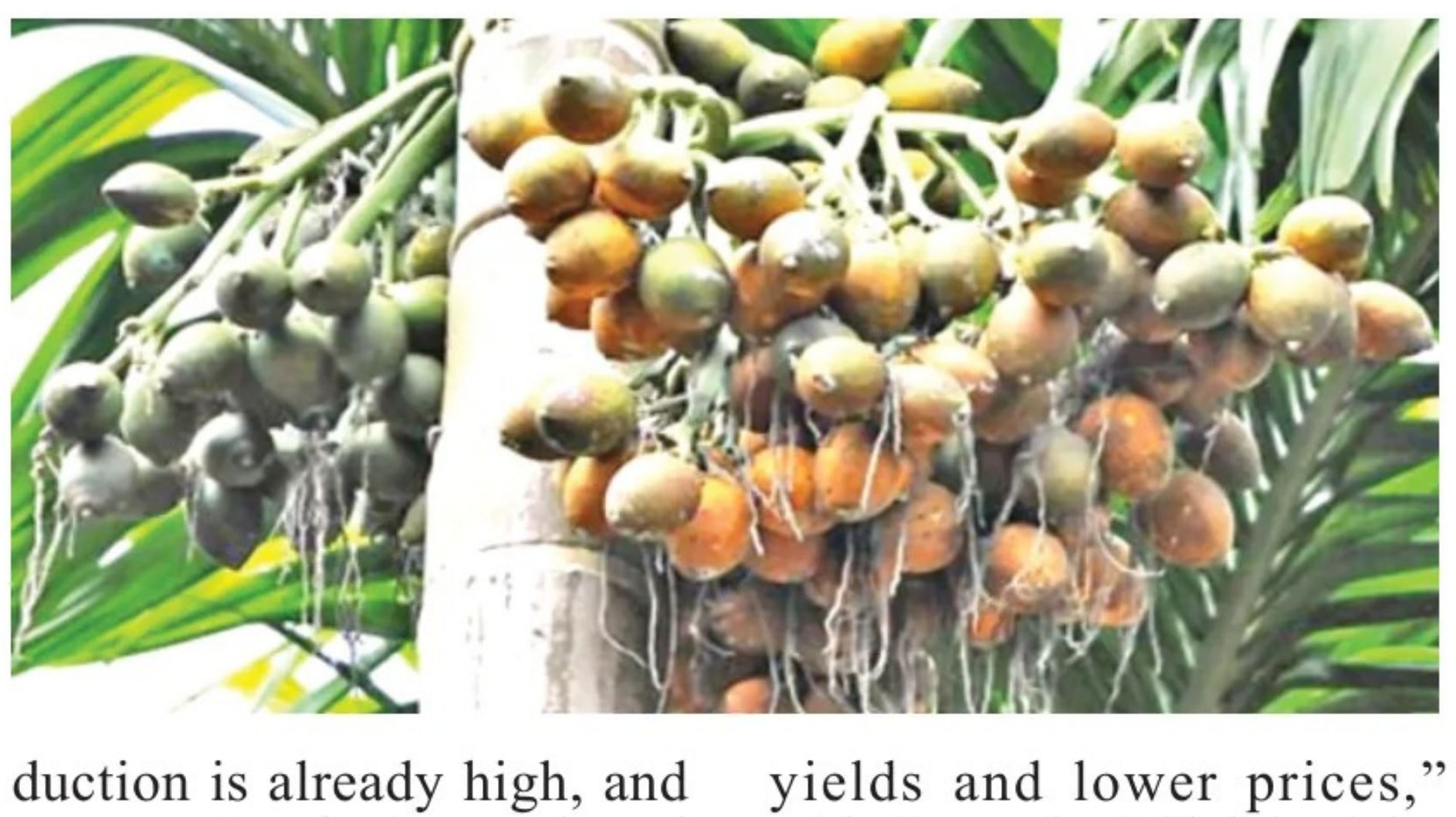
Chaptagar Samaj Sudharak Sangha president Ravindra Naik welcomed the gathering and highlighted the organisation's commitment to educational empowerment and community development.

The programme was inaugurated by Dr Manohar Naik of P.A. College of Pharmacy, Mangaluru, who lit the ceremonial lamp. Addressing the students, Dr Naik spoke in detail about educational pathways and employment opportunities in the field of pharmaceutical sciences, stressing the growing scope of the sector and the importance of focused career planning. Presiding over the programme, World Konkani Centre president C.A. Nandagopal Shenai emphasised the relevance of integrating education with skill training in the present era. He noted that the World Konkani Centre was hosting a skill development camp for Chaptagar community students for the first time and urged participants to make the best use of the opportunity. Encouraging students to strengthen their mental resilience, he said they should grow "like a banyan tree — wide, inclusive and confident — and actively contribute to society."

ARECANUT DISEASE CRISIS

Arecanut Growers Reeling as Leaf Spot Disease Ravages Coastal Plantations

MANGALURU



Arecanut growers in Dakshina Kannada are facing a significant crisis as leaf spot disease spreads rapidly in plantations, threatening crop yields and production. The disease, which typically appears during the monsoon season, has been exacerbated by heavy and prolonged rainfall, causing infected palms to show dried fronds. The affected areas include Bantwal and Puttur in Dakshina Kannada district, where farmers are struggling to control the disease despite repeated spraying efforts. "It's been a relentless battle," says Arecanut farmer Ramesh from Puttur. "We've tried everything, but the disease just won't budge."

The continuous need for spraying, combined with rising labor costs and expenses, has added to the burden on growers. "The cost of production is already high, and now we're facing reduced yields and lower prices," adds Ramesh. Officials claim the spread is under control, citing reduced rainfall, and are providing guidance and technical advice to affected farmers. "We're working closely with farmers to contain the outbreak and minimize losses," says a department spokesperson. However, farmers are skeptical, and the situation remains concerning. With the disease showing no signs of abating, the future of arecanut farming in the region hangs in the balance. The outbreak comes at a time when arecanut prices are already under pressure due to market fluctuations. The loss of crop yield could further exacerbate the economic strain on farmers, who are already grappling with rising input costs.

As the situation unfolds, farmers are looking towards the government and agricultural authorities to provide effective solutions to combat the disease and mitigate the damage.

QUICK READ

Outrage after Video Shows Grandfather Forcing Minor to Consume Alcohol

BELAGAVI

A shocking incident from Belagavi district has triggered widespread condemnation after a video surfaced on social media showing an elderly man allegedly forcing his minor grandson to consume alcohol inside a bar. The incident reportedly occurred in a bar located in Raybag, and the video has since gone viral, drawing sharp reactions from the public. While it is not uncommon for people to visit bars with friends or relatives, the visuals in this case have deeply disturbed viewers. In the video, the grandfather is seen taking the young boy into the bar and allegedly making him drink alcohol, despite objections raised by people present at the establishment.

Elephant Returns to Roads, Forest Department Steps up Vigil

CHAMARAJANAGAR

The elephant menace has resurfaced in Chamarajanagar district with the renewed movement of a notorious elephant popularly known as "Banana Baby," triggering anxiety among commuters and residents in border areas. After remaining inactive for nearly three months, the elephant has once again begun venturing out of forest limits into human habitations in search of food. According to local residents and forest officials, the elephant has developed a particular preference for vehicles transporting bananas. The animal has been repeatedly stopping vehicles mid-road, especially those suspected to be carrying banana consignments, creating tense moments for drivers and passengers.

Language Row Erupts Over Kannada Plaque at Mutt

MANTRALAYA

A linguistic dispute has erupted at the famous Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Mantralaya, located near the Andhra–Karnataka border, after Telugu-speaking devotees objected to a plaque written in Kannada at the main entrance of the mutt. The plaque bears the Sanskrit verse "Pujyaya Raghavendraya Satyadharma Ratayacha" rendered in Kannada script, which has triggered strong reactions on social media. Mantralaya, a major pilgrimage centre for devotees of Sri Raghavendra Swamy, falls under Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh. With lakhs of devotees from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, and other parts of the country visiting the mutt every year.

Talent Hunt Examination for Class 10 Students Held Successfully

Over a thousand Class 10 students participated examination organised to identify hidden potential

GADAG

A Talent Hunt Examination for Class 10 students was successfully conducted in Gadag by the Adiyogi Educational Trust, a well-known educational institution in the city. The examination was held at Mylaraappa Menasagi PU College and witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than one thousand students from various schools.

The objective of the talent hunt examination was to identify and encourage the hidden abilities of students at an early stage. Participants were given the opportunity to express their knowledge, creativity, and analytical skills through a written examination. Students from different parts of Gadag district took part in the test, reflecting the growing interest among young learners to showcase their talents beyond regular classroom assessments.

Addressing the students on the occasion, Adiyogi Educational Trust President Shri S. G. Patil said that talent often lies dormant within children and needs the right platform to emerge. "Every child has unique abilities. Our institution strives to bring out this hidden talent and provide encouragement. With this intention, we organised the Talent Hunt Examination for Class 10 students," he said. He also distributed cash prizes to the winners and congratulated them for their achievement.

The event was attended by Trust Secretary Pavan Kumar Sheth and Treasurer Kumar Rathod, who jointly congratulated the prize-winning students and appreciated their efforts. They emphasised that such competitive examinations help students build confidence, improve writing skills, and prepare them for future academic challenges.

Parents and teachers who were present expressed appreciation for the initiative, stating that programmes like these motivate students to think creatively and aim higher in their academic journey. The smooth and disciplined conduct of the examination was also widely appreciated by participants. The Adiyogi Educational Trust announced that it plans to organise more such academic and talent development programmes in the future, with the aim of nurturing young minds and contributing to the overall educational growth of the region.

Motorcyclist Killed After Being Hit by Unknown Vehicle

MALAVALLI

A tragic road accident claimed the life of a motorcyclist near Malavalli on Sunday after an unidentified vehicle rammed into his bike and fled the scene. The fatal incident occurred near the 10th milestone on the Malavalli road, police said.

According to preliminary information, the victim was riding his motorcycle when an unknown vehicle, reportedly moving at high speed, collided with the bike. The impact of the collision was severe, throwing the rider onto the road and causing critical injuries. Passersby rushed to the spot and alerted the police and emergency services.

The injured motorcyclist was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival due to the seriousness of the injuries sustained in the accident. The identity of the deceased is yet to be officially confirmed, and police are in the process of informing the family members. Following the incident, personnel from the Malavalli police station visited the spot and conducted a preliminary investigation. A case has been registered, and efforts are underway to trace the unidentified vehicle involved in the hit-and-run. Police officials said CCTV footage from nearby areas and highways is being examined to gather clues about the offending vehicle. Local residents expressed concern over frequent accidents on the stretch near the 10th milestone, citing poor visibility and rash driving as major causes. They demanded stricter enforcement of traffic rules and improved safety measures to prevent such fatal mishaps in the future.

Armed Robbers Loot Gold and Diamond Jewellery Worth ₹5 Cr

HUNSUR

A shocking incident of armed robbery was reported in Hunsur town of Mysuru district on Sunday, where five masked robbers looted gold and diamond ornaments worth an estimated ₹4 to ₹5 crore in broad daylight. The robbery took place at Sky Golds and Diamonds, located behind the Hunsur bus stand, sending shockwaves across the town.

According to preliminary information, the five accused arrived on motorcycles and entered the jewellery shop during business hours. Masked and armed with guns, they threatened the shop staff and customers, creating panic inside the premises. Within minutes, the robbers reportedly stuffed gold and diamond ornaments into a bag and fled the scene before anyone could react.

Local residents and shopkeepers in the busy bus stand area were stunned by the audacity of the crime, as the robbery occurred in full public view during the daytime.

SKY
GOLD & DIAMONDS
ಸ್ಕೈ ಗೋಲ್ಡ್
ಅಂಡ್ ಡೈಮಂಡ್ಸ್

Panic gripped Hunsur after masked robbers looted a jewellery shop at gunpoint in a daring daylight robbery.

Eyewitnesses said the entire operation was swift and well-coordinated, leaving little time for resistance or immediate police intervention.

As soon as information about the robbery surfaced, Hunsur police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation. Senior police officials also visited the scene to assess the situation and gather details. Inspector General of Police Boralingaiah and Additional Superintendent of Police Nagesh inspected the jewellery shop and reviewed the preliminary findings with local officers.

Police sources confirmed that the jewellery shop, owned by a businessman from Kerala, was inaugurated on April 27, 2015, and has been operating in the town for nearly a decade. CCTV footage from the shop and surrounding areas is being examined to identify the culprits and trace their escape route. Checkposts have been alerted, and special teams have been formed to track down the robbers.

A case has been registered, and police said all possible angles, including inter-district and interstate links, are being probed.

Free Eye Check-Up Camp for Auto Drivers Inaugurated

KOPPAL

As part of the 70th Kannada Rajyotsava and the 121st birth anniversary of Rashtrakavi Kuvempu, a free eye check-up camp for auto drivers was inaugurated on Sunday at the Taluk Sports Ground in Koppal. The programme was organised by the H. Shivaramegowda faction of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike and formally launched at 10.15 am with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp and floral tributes to Kuvempu's portrait.

Inaugurating the programme, State Vice-President Ajjappa Karadakal said that every activity undertaken by organisations should benefit society and serve as a model for others. He noted that auto drivers from across Koppal district actively participated in the free eye examination camp. He assured that the organisation would continue to extend various welfare facilities for auto drivers in the future. Highlighting Kuvempu's contributions, Karadakal said the great writer's literature, love for Kannada land and language, and progressive thoughts should serve as guiding principles for today's youth. He called upon citizens to actively contribute to the growth of Kannada language, culture, and literature.

Speaking on the occasion, Karnataka Rakshana Vedike District President Shivraj Ullagaddi emphasised the importance of eye health, stating that eyes are among the most vital organs of the human body and play a crucial role in daily life.

A critically ill newborn was rushed from Koppal to Hubballi in zero traffic for urgent life-saving surgery

Newborn with Protruding Intestines Rushed in Zero Traffic for Treatment

KOPPAL

In a remarkable display of coordination and urgency, a newborn baby boy born just 10 hours earlier was rushed from Koppal district to Hubballi for emergency treatment after doctors found that his intestines had protruded outside the body, a rare and life-threatening condition requiring immediate surgical intervention.

The baby was born at the Kuknoor Government Hospital to Mallappa and Vijayalakshmi, residents of Guttur village in Kuknoor taluk. Soon after birth, doctors noticed that the newborn was suffering from a severe congenital condition in which the intestines were outside the abdominal cavity, putting the infant's life at serious risk.

Given the critical nature of the condition and the lack of advanced neonatal surgical facilities locally, doctors decided that the baby required immediate specialised care. Arrangements were swiftly made to shift both the mother and the newborn to KIMS Hubballi, located approximately 110 kilometres away.

To save precious time, a zero-traffic corridor was created for the ambulance convoy. In an extraordinary effort, five ambulances were deployed to ensure uninterrupted medical support during the long journey. The Karnataka Police played a crucial role by clearing traffic along the entire route, enabling the ambulances to travel without delay.

Sources said the baby, born barely 10 hours earlier, was battling for life throughout the journey. Medical staff continuously monitored the infant while oxygen support and emergency care were provided inside the ambulance. The mother, who had undergone delivery only hours earlier, was also transported alongside under medical supervision. The seamless coordination between doctors, ambulance services, and the police department ensured that the newborn reached Hubballi in the shortest possible time.

Give police freedom to work: MP Yaduveer Wodeyar

DAVANGERE

Mysuru MP Yaduveer Wodeyar on Sunday criticised the State government, saying that while Karnataka has a strong police and intelligence apparatus, the force must be given the freedom to function independently.

Speaking in Davangere, Wodeyar referred to recent Maharashtra police raids on drug factories in the State and claimed that political interference was hampering effective policing. "When the BJP was in power, no such constraints existed. Today, the police are forced to act as per the government's directions and do not enjoy operational freedom," he alleged. On the blast incident near the Mysuru Palace, the MP said the National Investigation Agency was probing the case and urged restraint until the official report was submitted. "Let the investigation conclude. I will speak after the report is out," he said. Responding to Kerala Chief Minister's criticism of house evictions in Bengaluru, Wodeyar said such matters should be addressed legally. "The courts or competent authorities will decide whether the action is legal or illegal," he added.

He also accused the Congress of misleading the public over various issues, including protests related to name changes, calling them propaganda-driven election tactics. The concept of Viksit Bharat, he said, reflected Mahatma Gandhi's vision of development and self-reliance.

Cow Killed in Suspected Tiger Attack, Forest Officials Inspect Spot

MYSURU

A cow was killed in a suspected tiger attack in Hunsur taluk of Mysuru district, raising fresh concerns over human-wildlife conflict in the region. The incident occurred near Angatahalli in Hunsur city limits, close to agricultural fields adjoining forest areas.

According to local sources, the cow belonged to Venkategowda, a farmer from Nilavagalu village. The animal had been let out to graze in the field when it was allegedly attacked by a tiger. The cow suffered fatal injuries and died on the spot, leaving the farmer distressed over the sudden loss.

Villagers who noticed the carcass immediately informed forest officials, suspecting the involvement of a big cat based on the nature of the injuries and paw marks found near the site. The incident has created fear among farmers and cattle owners in the surrounding villages, many of whom depend on open grazing for their livestock.

Officials from the Karnataka Forest Department rushed to the spot after receiving information and conducted a detailed inspection. Forest personnel examined the carcass and the surrounding area to confirm the cause of death. Preliminary observations reportedly indicate a tiger attack, though officials said further verification would be carried out before issuing a final confirmation.

Forest department sources said the area falls within a known wildlife movement corridor, and occasional sightings of big cats have been reported earlier as well. They added that steps would be taken to intensify patrolling in the region and alert villagers to avoid letting cattle graze unattended near forest fringes.

Residents have urged the authorities to take preventive measures such as installing warning signboards, using solar fencing, and ensuring timely compensation for affected farmers. They also demanded increased monitoring to prevent any threat to human life.

Forest officials have advised villagers to remain cautious, especially during early morning and late evening hours, and to immediately report any wildlife sightings.

MLA Inspects Dollars Colony, Directs to Resolve Issues

SHIVAMOGGA

Shivamogga MLA S N Channabasappa on Sunday morning visited Dollars Colony in Ward No. 03 of Shivamogga city to review local issues and take feedback directly from residents. The visit was aimed at understanding ground-level problems and ensuring their speedy resolution.

During the inspection, the MLA interacted with local residents and concerned officials, listening to grievances related to civic amenities. Residents brought to his attention issues including drinking water supply and other basic infrastructure concerns affecting daily life in the area.

After reviewing the situation, Channabasappa issued clear instructions to officials to resolve the problems expeditiously and in an effective manner. He stressed that delays in addressing public issues would not be tolerated and directed departments concerned to work in coordination to provide immediate relief to residents.

A major focus of the visit was the drinking water supply in Dollars Colony. The MLA specifically instructed officials to ensure uninterrupted and quality drinking water to all households. He said that public inconvenience due to irregular or poor-quality water supply should be avoided at any cost, and necessary measures must be taken to maintain consistent distribution.

Officials accompanying the MLA assured him that steps would be taken promptly to address the issues raised by residents. They informed him that corrective actions, including technical checks and monitoring of water supply systems, would be initiated to prevent recurring problems.

Residents appreciated the MLA's visit and his direct engagement with the public. They expressed hope that the assurances given would translate into swift action on the ground.

QUICK READ

Farmer's Millet Harvest Counters 'Barren Land' Claim by Authorities

ANEKAL

A quiet yet powerful protest has emerged from Anekal taluk, where a progressive farmer has used his successful millet harvest to challenge official claims that the region's agricultural land is barren. In Medahalli village, under the Mayasandra Gram Panchayat, farmer Murugesh responded to government reports not with slogans or demonstrations, but with a bountiful crop grown on the very land labelled unproductive.

According to locals, Murugesh offered prayers to stacks of freshly harvested millet in his field, symbolically presenting the crop as a silent response to officials who had reportedly classified fertile farmlands in Anekal taluk as barren.

DNA Reports of Five Victims Reach Police

CHITRADURGA

In a significant development in the Javanagondanahalli bus tragedy case, police have received the DNA examination reports of five deceased victims. The reports were forwarded from the forensic science laboratory, enabling authorities to formally confirm the identities of those who lost their lives in the tragic accident near Javanagondanahalli in Chitradurga district. According to police sources, DNA samples of the deceased identified as Navya, Manasa, Rashmi, Bindhu, and a minor child Greeya had been sent for forensic analysis to establish their identities beyond doubt. Blood samples collected from the victims' families were forwarded to the forensic science laboratory in Hubballi for matching.

Sobane Bachamma Honoured with K'taka Folklore Academy Award

DEVANAHALLI

Devanahalli taluk has become a centre of cultural pride as Sobane Bachamma of Haliyur village has been conferred with the prestigious award of the Karnataka Folklore Academy. The recognition comes in appreciation of her lifelong dedication to preserving folk words, songs, and oral traditions that form the cultural backbone of rural Karnataka. Sobane Bachamma, fondly known as Sobane Aunty in her village, is regarded as one of the rare women folk artistes who kept folk traditions alive despite facing severe hardships in life. With the strength of her words and songs, she ensured that the folk culture of her village continued to breathe even as modern influences pushed many such traditions to the margins.

Meet Held under Dharmasthala Grama Abhivruddhi Yojane

A religious and community programme was organised at Bhatambra village highlighting Dharmasthala Grama Abhivruddhi Yojane initiatives

BHALKI

Bhalki taluk witnessed a spiritually enriching and socially meaningful programme as a religious gathering and community event was organised at Bhatambra village under the Dharmasthala Grama Abhivruddhi Yojane. The programme was held with the objective of promoting holistic rural development alongside spiritual and cultural values, drawing active participation from villagers and local leaders. Speaking on the occasion, Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Sagar Khandre said that the Dharmasthala Grama Abhivruddhi Yojane is playing a vital role in empowering rural communities and improving the quality of life of villagers. He noted that programmes conducted under the scheme are directly contributing to social progress and economic upliftment at the grassroots level. The MP highlighted that initiatives such as collective prayers, religious gatherings, and social awareness activities help strengthen unity and moral values among people.

The event included a collective special prayer, followed by a religious assembly, which was formally inaugurated by lighting the lamp. Through various welfare-oriented activities such as self-help group support, financial assistance, women empowerment programmes, educational aid, and health awareness initiatives, the Dharmasthala Grama Abhivruddhi Yojane has been delivering impactful results in the region. Speakers appreciated the scheme for its comprehensive approach toward village development.

It was also recalled that senior Rajya Sabha member Veerendra Heggade had extended financial support of ₹5 crore for rural development initiatives in Bidar district, which has significantly boosted ongoing projects. The contribution was described as a source of pride and encouragement for villagers.

Addressing the gathering, district director of the Dharmasthala Grama Abhivruddhi Yojane Muraleedhar H.L. explained that the scheme functions as a charitable trust and actively supports self-help groups by providing easy loans, drinking water facilities, lake rejuvenation, temple development, and grants for community halls. He said numerous social programmes are being implemented to ensure sustainable development in villages.

Demand Raised for Repair of Historic Fort

TENGALI

Kalaburagi district has witnessed a renewed call for heritage conservation and rural development, with a formal memorandum submitted seeking urgent repair of the historic fort located in Tengali village. The appeal was made under the framework of the government's Kayaka Grama development programme, which aims at achieving comprehensive rural development encompassing economic, social, environmental, and cultural progress. According to the memorandum dated December 26, 2025, the fort in Tengali village, constructed during the reign of King Nripatunga, has been in a severely dilapidated condition for several years. Despite its historical and cultural significance, the structure has suffered neglect and deterioration, raising concerns among local residents and heritage enthusiasts about the possible loss of an important symbol of the region's past.

The issue was earlier highlighted during a public phone-in programme organised on May 17, 2025, by the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat, Shri Bhavarsingh Meena. The programme was intended to address public grievances related to Gram Panchayat matters. During the interaction, a specific request was raised regarding the urgent repair of the Tengali fort. Responding to the concern, the Chief Executive Officer reportedly instructed the concerned taluk officials to prepare a detailed estimate for restoration works. Following these directions, taluk-level officials have prepared and submitted an estimated proposal amounting to approximately ₹16 lakh for undertaking the necessary repair and conservation works.

Ramanagara rocked by exposed illegal foodgrain black market

RAMANAGARA

Authorities uncovered a ration smuggling network in Ramanagara, seizing huge quantities of rice and ragi meant for poor families.

Ramanagara district has come under sharp focus following the exposure of an organised black market network involved in the illegal diversion and sale of subsidised foodgrains meant for the poor. Rice, millets, and other essential commodities that should have reached beneficiaries through BPL (Priority Families) cards and AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana) cards were instead being siphoned off and sold in the open market, depriving vulnerable families of their entitled rations.

According to officials, the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department has seized a total of 701.25 quintals of rice and 166.31 quintals of ragi over the past two years.

These foodgrains were allegedly being transported for illegal sale in Kallasante markets. Acting on credible and specific information, enforcement teams conducted raids at multiple locations, intercepting vehicles used for smuggling ration commodities.

The department confirmed that 26 cases related to ration smuggling have been registered across various police stations in the district. Investigations have revealed the existence of a well-organised network involving middlemen who illegally procured foodgrains from fair price shops or beneficiaries and diverted them to commercial markets for profit. Officials said the scale and frequency of seizures indicate that ration diversion has been ongoing for a considerable period.

Most of the smuggling cases detected in Ramanagara district were intercepted along the busy Bengaluru–Mysuru National Highway, a key transit route frequently used to transport foodgrains illegally. Vehicles carrying ration rice and ragi were found heading towards Bengaluru, Mandya, and Mysuru, where demand for such commodities in informal markets is reportedly high. Department officials stated that smugglers often disguised ration stocks as legally sourced grain to evade checks.

Police Issue Guidelines for New Year Celebrations

RAMANAGARA

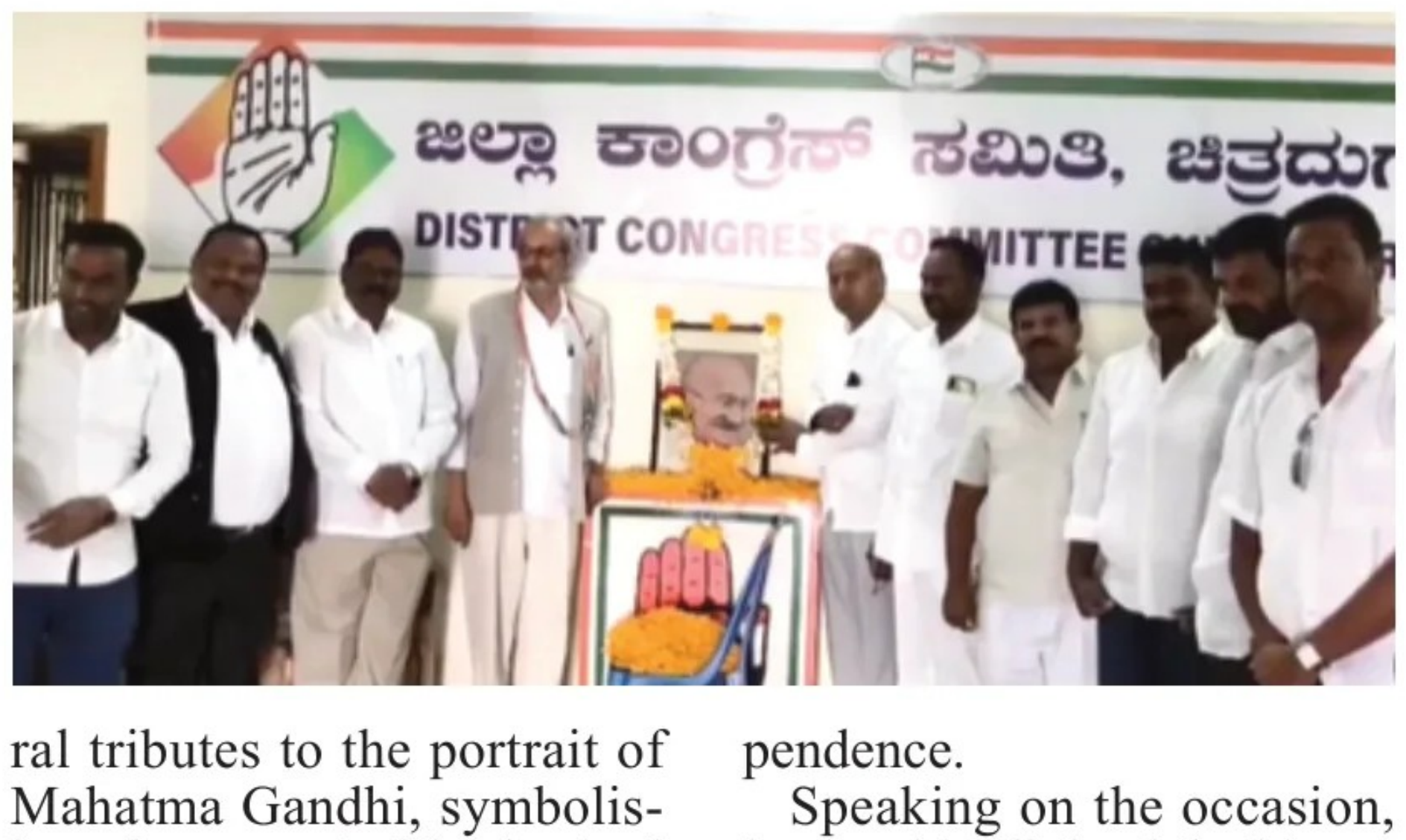
Ramanagara police have announced a set of rules and regulations to be followed during New Year celebrations to maintain public safety and law and order. Addressing the media, Rajendra said that while citizens are free to celebrate the New Year, celebrations must remain within the framework of the law and should not cause inconvenience or danger to others.

The Assistant Superintendent of Police stated that strict action will be taken against drunken driving, reckless riding, and overspeeding. Police teams will conduct intensive vehicle checks across the district, especially during night hours, to prevent accidents and ensure road safety. He warned that those found driving under the influence of alcohol would face immediate legal action, including fines, licence suspension, and vehicle seizure as per rules.ASP Rajendra also said that loud music, DJ parties, and public celebrations beyond permissible limits would not be allowed. Organisers of New Year events must obtain prior permission from the police and adhere to the prescribed time limits and noise regulations. Use of narcotic substances, dangerous stunts, and public nuisance will be dealt with strictly.To prevent untoward incidents, additional police personnel will be deployed at sensitive locations, public gathering spots, highways, and tourist areas. Surveillance and patrolling will be intensified throughout the district on New Year's Eve.

Cong party's Foundation Day was celebrated at the district Cong office in Chitradurga on Sunday morning

Cong Foundation Day Celebrated at District Cong Office

CHITRADURGA



The Foundation Day of the Indian National Congress was celebrated with enthusiasm and reverence at the district Congress office in Chitradurga on Sunday, December 28, 2025. The programme was organised at 11 am, bringing together party leaders, office-bearers, and workers to commemorate the party's long legacy and its contributions to India's freedom movement and nation-building.

The event was held under the chairmanship of district Congress president M.K. Taj Peer, who presided over the programme. The celebrations began with the offering of floral tributes to the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, symbolising the party's ideological roots in truth, non-violence, and social justice. Party leaders paid homage to the values upheld by the Mahatma and recalled his role in shaping the Congress as a mass movement that led India to independence.

Speaking on the occasion, leaders highlighted the historic role played by the Congress in the country's freedom struggle and in laying the foundations of a democratic and secular India. They said the party has consistently worked for the welfare of the poor, marginalised, farmers, labourers, women, and minorities, while safeguarding the Constitution and democratic institutions.

Addressing party workers, district president M.K. Taj Peer said that the Congress, since its inception, has stood for unity, harmony, and inclusive development.

He emphasised the need for party workers to stay connected with people at the grassroots level and to take forward the party's programmes and policies with dedication and discipline. He called upon workers to strengthen the organisation in the district and prepare collectively for upcoming political challenges.

Account Holders Protest over Alleged Fraud by Postman

GOURIBIDANUR

Hundreds of account holders staged a massive protest at the sub-post office in Gouribidanur, demanding justice and immediate repayment of money allegedly defrauded by a postman. The protesters accused postman Ramya of cheating women and elderly depositors of crores of rupees by persuading them to make payments at the post office under false assurances.

According to agitating account holders, many victims were convinced to deposit large sums believing their money would be safely credited to postal savings schemes. However, they later discovered discrepancies in their accounts, triggering anger and distress among families, particularly senior citizens and women who rely heavily on post office savings.

From early morning, account holders arrived at the post office premises, some even coming on tractors from surrounding villages. They remained at the site till evening, raising slogans and demanding accountability from postal authorities. Protesters insisted that they would not leave until clear action was taken and assurances were given regarding the return of their hard-earned money.

As tensions escalated, police were called in to maintain order. City Police Station PSI Gopal and Rural Police Station PSI Ramesh Guggari rushed to the spot and attempted to pacify the crowd. For a while, heated verbal exchanges took place between the protesting customers and the police as emotions ran high.

Despite repeated attempts by police to convince the protesters to disperse peacefully, the account holders remained firm, demanding the presence of senior postal officials and a clear roadmap for reimbursement. Protesters alleged that no post office officials turned up at the office during the agitation, further fueling public anger. The incident has raised serious concerns about the safety of small savings deposited by rural customers in post offices.

KUVEMPU JAYANTI RAMANAGARA

Kuvempu Jayanti Celebrated by Kannada Sahitya Parishat

RAMANAGARA

Ramanagara city marked the birth anniversary of renowned poet, thinker, and Jnanpith awardee Kuvempu with a meaningful celebration organised by the taluk Kannada Sahitya Parishat. The programme was held with the objective of remembering Kuvempu's immense contribution to Kannada literature, language, and cultural thought, while also inspiring the younger generation to imbibe his ideals.

The event began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, followed by floral tributes offered to Kuvempu's portrait. Speakers recalled Kuvempu's role in shaping modern Kannada literature and his vision of Vishwamanava, which advocates universal humanism, equality, and harmony. They emphasised that Kuvempu's literary works and philosophical ideas remain relevant even today and continue to guide society toward progressive thinking.

Addressing the gathering, senior members of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat said Kuvempu dedicated his life to enriching Kannada language and nurturing cultural values rooted in social justice. His poems, essays, and novels, they said, not only reflect deep literary excellence but also convey strong messages of humanity, rationality, and inclusiveness. They urged students and youth to read Kuvempu's works and understand the depth of his thoughts to build a more conscious and compassionate society.

The speakers also highlighted the responsibility of institutions like the Kannada Sahitya Parishat in preserving and promoting Kannada language and literature. They called upon citizens to actively participate in literary and cultural programmes and contribute to the growth of Kannada as a living and evolving language. Several literary enthusiasts, Parishat office-bearers, writers, teachers, students, and members of the public attended the programme. The event concluded with a collective pledge to uphold Kuvempu's ideals and to work toward strengthening Kannada language, culture, and literature in everyday life.

QUICK READ

CBI court sentences ex-Postal Asstn to 5-year prison

Bhopal

A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court in Bhopal has sentenced a former Postal Assistant to five years' Rigorous Imprisonment in connection with a Rs 13.85 lakh fraud case, an official statement said. The court's ruling came during which it also imposed a fine of Rs 14,000 on accused Rajnish Tiwari, Postal Assistant, Lashkar Head Post Office, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, a statement issued by the CBI said. The case was registered on April 20, 2022, based on the written complaint of the Senior Superintendent of Post Office, Gwalior.

Crime branch files charge sheet in job fraud case

Srinagar

The J&K Crime Branch said on Sunday that it has filed a charge sheet against the accused in a large-scale job fraud committed by a recruiter through a fake NGO. A statement by the Crime Branch Kashmir said, The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch Kashmir has filed a charge sheet against a Srinagar resident accused of orchestrating a large-scale job fraud by posing as a recruiter through a fake NGO. The accused duped several Tangmarg residents of lakhs of rupees by promising jobs in hospitals and banks and issuing forged appointment letters under the guise of SAI NGO Consultancy.

Cong marks 140th foundation day with flag hoisting

The Indian National Congress commemorated its 140th Foundation Day in New Delhi, recalling sacrifices, ideology, and democratic legacy

NEW DELHI

The Indian National Congress on Sunday marked its 140th Foundation Day with a solemn flag-hoisting ceremony at Indira Bhawan in New Delhi, bringing together the party's top leadership and senior functionaries. The event was attended by Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge, Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, along with several veteran leaders and party workers.

Sharing details of the ceremony on social media platform X, the Congress said that Kharge hoisted the party flag in the presence of senior leaders and urged members to take the Congress's vision and ideology to every individual. The party reiterated its commitment to ensuring social justice for all and working towards building a prosperous and inclusive India.

Addressing party workers after the flag hoisting, Kharge congratulated Congress members on the milestone Foundation Day and extended advance New Year greetings. Recalling the party's origins, he said the Congress was founded on December 28, 1885, in Mumbai, and underscored the immense sacrifices made by millions of Congress workers during India's freedom struggle. He noted that countless members went to jail and endured hardships to secure independence for the nation.

Paying tribute to freedom fighters, Kharge said the Congress, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, united women, the poor, and people from all sections of society into a mass national movement. He highlighted that the historic 1931 Karachi resolution later became a foundational pillar of India's Constitution, while cautioning that democracy in the country was currently under threat.

Highlighting significant milestones, Kharge pointed out that the nation is observing 75 years of the adoption of the Constitution, the 150th birth anniversary of the Constitution, and the centenary of Sarojini Naidu becoming Congress president. He observed that while many countries that gained independence around 1947 struggled or slid into dictatorship, India alone sustained a democratic system, which he attributed to the foresight and sacrifices of Congress leaders.

Murder suspect arrested after gunfight with police

MATHURA

A man, who allegedly killed a 27-year-old villager on suspicion of having an affair with his wife, was arrested during an encounter with police in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. The accused, identified as Dharmender, was wanted in connection with the murder case of Mukesh. Acting on information about the presence of the accused in Usfar village, the police rushed to the spot and gheraoed him. When asked to surrender, the accused opened fire on the police team. The police also fired in self-defence, during which Dharmender received a wound in the leg.

Several senior political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir alleged house arrest in Srinagar ahead of students' protests

J&K leaders allege house arrest ahead of students' protest

SRINAGAR

Ahead of their planned participation in a students' protest against the job reservation policy in Jammu and Kashmir, several prominent political leaders on Sunday alleged that they were placed under house arrest in Srinagar, sparking fresh controversy over political restrictions and civil liberties in the Union Territory.

Former Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party chief Mehbooba Mufti, National Conference Member of Parliament Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, PDP legislator Waheed Para, and former Srinagar Mayor Junaid Azim Mattoo reportedly alleged that security personnel prevented them from leaving their residences to join the protest.

PDP leader Iltija Mufti, daughter of Mehbooba Mufti, said she too was placed under house arrest at her Srinagar residence. Posting on social media platform X, she alleged that security agencies had deployed an entire contingent of women police personnel outside her home to physically stop her from stepping out. Describing the situation as paranoia, she questioned the grounds under which the action was taken and termed it part of what she sarcastically called the normalcy narrative in Jammu and Kashmir.

Supporters of NC MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi also claimed that armed police personnel were stationed outside his residence in Srinagar to prevent him from joining the students' demonstration. According to them, the deployment was aimed at stopping political leaders from expressing solidarity with protesting students.

PDP MLA Waheed Para similarly alleged that he was not allowed to leave his house. In a detailed post on X, Para described the reservation policy as an existential issue affecting the future of younger generations. He said it had been over a year since students and political representatives had been demanding clarity and reform, including through sit-ins near the residence of former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

'Digvijaya Singh realising BJP's strength after long time'

NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader and MP Ravi Shankar Prasad on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the Congress after veteran leader Digvijaya Singh praised the organisational strength of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), saying it reflected a delayed realisation of the BJP's robust grassroots structure. Reacting to Singh's remarks, Prasad said, Digvijaya is realising after a long time that the BJP organisation is very strong, which is good. He went on to take a swipe at the Congress leadership, particularly Rahul Gandhi, questioning his relevance within his own party.

What does Rahul Gandhi say when the country does not take him seriously? Now, even his party does not take him seriously. Senior leaders like Digvijaya Singh say that Rahul Gandhi doesn't listen, so what is the point of speaking to him? Prasad said. He further claimed that repeated electoral defeats had weakened the Congress, adding that the party had been wiped out in several municipal corporations and local bodies and had performed poorly even in states like Maharashtra and Bihar. He doesn't even have the scope to run an electric rickshaw, Prasad remarked.

The political row erupted after Digvijaya Singh shared an old black-and-white photograph of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP veteran Lal Krishna Advani on social media platform X.

NGT seeks fresh report on forest encroachment

NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered a fresh inspection into the alleged encroachment of nearly six hectares of forest land between Press Enclave and Saket Sports Complex in south Delhi. The tribunal said earlier reports failed to clearly establish whether the disputed land was forest land and did not specify relevant khasra numbers. Acting on a suo motu case based on a media report, the NGT noted claims that about 500 jhuggis had encroached on the Saket forest area. Authorities have been given four weeks to submit a detailed report. The case will be heard again on March 16, 2026.

Mann Ki Baat: PM reflects on 2025 achievements

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Mann Ki Baat recalled defining moments of 2025, highlighting national pride, progress, and unity

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday reflected on major and historic events of 2025, stating that the year infused India with even greater self-confidence and prepared the nation to step into 2026 with fresh hopes and resolutions. Addressing the country through his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, the Prime Minister said memories of achievements, discussions, and moments that united the nation were vivid as the year drew to a close.

In just a few days, the year 2026 will knock on our door. As I speak today, memories of the entire year are swirling in my mind, Modi said, adding that 2025 gave India many moments that made every citizen proud. He noted that India's imprint was visible everywhere—from national security and sports arenas to scientific laboratories and global platforms—underscoring the country's expanding influence.

Highlighting national security, the Prime Minister praised the Indian Armed Forces for their decisive action against terrorism in May. He described Operation Sindoor as a symbol of pride, asserting that the world witnessed India's firm stance on security.

According to Modi, the operation evoked widespread expressions of love and devotion for Maa Bharati across the country, reflecting a deep sense of national unity.

The Prime Minister also recalled cultural milestones, noting that 2025 marked 150 years of the national song Vande Mataram. He said citizens enthusiastically participated in celebrations and shared messages under the hashtag VandeMataram150, demonstrating collective pride in India's heritage. Sports achievements were another highlight of the year.

CM Stalin pays tribute to 'Captain' Vijayakanth

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin on Sunday paid heartfelt tributes to late DMDK founder and former actor-politician 'Captain' Vijayakanth on his second death anniversary, remembering him as a compassionate leader who earned the love and respect of the people through his service-oriented politics. In a message shared on social media, CM Stalin recalled his long association with Vijayakanth and praised his deep concern for the underprivileged.

On the remembrance day of 'Captain' Vijayakanth, I fondly recall my dear friend who won the hearts of the Tamil people through his magnanimity and commitment to helping those in need, the Chief Minister said, sharing a photograph of the two leaders.

Tributes poured in from across the political spectrum as leaders and party workers gathered at Vijayakanth's memorial in Koyambedu, Chennai.

The DMDK cadres paid emotional homage, with several seen in tears as they remembered their late leader.

Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and State Minister E.V. Velu were among those who visited the memorial to offer floral tributes. The homage was held in connection with the annual guru pooja of Vijayakanth.

The DMDK leaders had personally invited the Chief Minister to attend the event, highlighting the respect he continues to command across party lines.

Leaders from the BJP also paid their respects. Union Minister L. Murugan, Tamil Nadu BJP president Nainar Nagenthran, former Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, and senior leader Pon Radhakrishnan were present at the memorial. Film personalities, including directors R.K. Selvamani and Udayakumar, also paid homage.

Speaking on the occasion, Pon Radhakrishnan recalled Vijayakanth's political ideals, stating, The vision he held in 2014 remains relevant even today. Tamil Nadu must be protected, and corruption-free governance is essential. Vijayakanth believed in that path, and his wife, Premalatha Vijayakanth, continues to uphold his ideals.

BJP attacks DMK over criminal negligence

CHENNAI

A deadly water contamination incident in Karlambakkam village near Tiruttani, Tamil Nadu, has triggered a fierce political backlash, with BJP spokesperson A.N.S. Prasad accusing the DMK government of criminal negligence and administrative collapse. The incident, which claimed the lives of two residents and left several others hospitalised, has once again brought Tamil Nadu's drinking water safety and governance standards under scrutiny. The victims Ezhumalai (65) and Sudha (50), both from Scheduled Caste families reportedly consumed drinking water supplied by the local panchayat that was contaminated with sewage. More than ten others suffered severe vomiting and diarrhoea, forcing their admission to nearby hospitals.

Angered villagers staged road blockades, demanding accountability and immediate action. In a strongly worded statement, A.N.S. Prasad said the tragedy exposed the hollowness of the Dravidian Model and accused the DMK government of failing to ensure even the most basic public service safe drinking water.

This is not an accident but a consequence of administrative negligence. When governance collapses, the poor pay with their lives, he said.

Prasad pointed out that the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission has invested heavily in Tamil Nadu, with official figures showing over 89 per cent rural household tap coverage as of November 2025.

Despite receiving thousands of crores in central assistance, how are Scheduled Caste families still dying after consuming contaminated water? he asked, demanding answers from Chief Minister M.K. Stalin.

Calling for immediate action, the BJP leader demanded the suspension of the Tiruvallur District Collector and a high-level judicial probe into the incident. He also urged the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes to take suo motu cognisance of the deaths.

VOTER LIST VERIFICATION

ECI directs electoral officers to avoid explanatory notes

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has issued clear instructions to Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) in West Bengal, advising them to refrain from writing any explanatory notes on identity and supporting documents submitted by voters during hearing sessions on claims and objections to the draft electoral rolls.

According to sources in the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, West Bengal, the Commission has specifically directed EROs not to write the word verified on any documents produced by voters during the hearings. The instruction also applies to other explanatory remarks or scribbles that may create an impression that the documents have already been authenticated.

To ensure strict compliance, the ECI has instructed micro-observers, who have been specially appointed to supervise and review the hearing sessions, to closely monitor the process. These observers have been asked to ensure that no notes are made on the documents except for the mandatory signatures of the EROs and the voters concerned. Officials said that EROs may place their own signatures or those of the voters only on the reverse side of the documents, without any additional remarks.

निर्वाचन सदन
NIRVACHAN SADAN
भारत निर्वाचन आयोग
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Explaining the rationale behind this directive, sources said that merely receiving documents during the hearing does not amount to their verification or authentication. The ECI has emphasized that all submitted documents will undergo a structured three-stage verification process. The first level of scrutiny will be conducted by the concerned EROs, followed by a second-level verification by the respective District Magistrates. The final stage will involve a technical examination using sophisticated tools by the Commission's technical team.

This process is intended to fix accountability at every level of the electoral machinery involved in the hearing and verification process, sources said, adding that premature markings such as verified could compromise procedural clarity.

QUICK READ

Nothing political in post: Digvijaya Singh

New Delhi

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Sunday said that there was nothing political in his BJP-RSS post, even as Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor strongly supported the former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister's suggestion for strengthening the grand old party with discipline. Even I want our organisation to become stronger, and it is logical to have discipline in the party, Tharoor told media persons. Asked about his reaction to Singh's post on X, Tharoor said, Digvijaya Singh is the best person to put this question to. He can elaborate on this.

BJP slams Manickam Tagore over RSS remarks

New Delhi

BJP National Spokesperson R.P. Singh on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the Congress party and its MP Manickam Tagore over his remarks against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), warning that the leader should introspect or be prepared to face a defamation suit. The reaction came after Tagore, responding to senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh's praise for the RSS, mounted a fierce attack on the organisation, asserting that the Congress has nothing to learn from what he described as a hate-driven body.

BJP leaders pay tribute to Arun Jaitley on his birth anniversary

Senior BJP leaders paid rich tributes to Arun Jaitley on his birth anniversary, recalling his vision, intellect, and service

NEW DELHI

Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah on Sunday remembered former Union Minister Arun Jaitley on his 73rd birth anniversary, paying tribute to his towering contributions as a constitutional expert, parliamentarian, and party strategist.

In a post on social media platform X, Shah described Jaitley as a peerless constitutional and legal expert and an orator par excellence, adding that he left behind an indelible legacy as a parliamentarian. Shah noted that Jaitley would always be remembered for his role in several landmark legal issues and for strengthening the Bharatiya Janata Party with his sharp legal acumen. His dedicated role in strengthening the party with his sharp legal acumen will live on, withstanding every test of time, Shah wrote.

Marking the occasion, Jaitley's wife, Sangeeta Jaitley, joined a small gathering at a park in south Delhi to pay tribute to the late leader. Speaking to sources, she recalled his personal association with the park, which was later named Arun Jaitley Park. He used to come to this park for his daily walks, and his supporters later got it named 'Arun Jaitley Park'. Today is his birthday, and since he loved celebrating it, we are arranging tea today, which he greatly enjoyed, she said, reflecting on his simple pleasures and fond memories.

Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J. P. Nadda, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh paid floral tributes to the Padma Vibhushan awardee.

Jaitley was born on December 28, 1952, and served in several key ministerial roles, including Finance, Defence, and Law. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta also hailed Jaitley's contribution to nation-building, particularly in shaping India's economic framework.

Andhra CM offers prayers at Ayodhya temple

AYODHYA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday offered prayers at Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya. Naidu shared his thoughts, saying; today, I was blessed to have darshan and offer prayers at the divine and magnificent Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya. It was a peaceful and spiritually uplifting experience to be here once again. Lord Shri Ram's values and ideals are timeless lessons for us all. May they continue to guide and inspire us always. On his arrival in Ayodhya, officials of the Uttar Pradesh government welcomed the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister. Temple officials received him at Ram Mandir. Temple authorities also briefed Chandrababu Naidu on various architectural and spiritual features of Ram Mandir.

Kerala Congress faced embarrassment as the national anthem was sung incorrectly during its 141st Foundation Day celebrations

Kerala Congress embarrassed over incorrect singing of national anthem

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala unit of the Indian National Congress (INC) faced embarrassment on Sunday when a line of the national anthem was reportedly sung incorrectly during the party's 141st Foundation Day celebrations at the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) office.

The event began with the hoisting of the Congress party flag, followed by leaders and volunteers joining together to sing the national anthem. However, the opening line was reportedly mispronounced, drawing attention from attendees and viewers. Senior party leaders, including A.K. Antony, V.M. Sudheeran, Deepa Das Munshi, and Palode Ravi, were present at the occasion, alongside Seva Dal volunteers who took part in the ceremony.

Television channels broadcast visuals of the incorrect rendition, amplifying the embarrassment for the party. Despite widespread coverage, there was no immediate response or clarification from Congress leadership regarding the incident.

The 141st Foundation Day celebrations were held across Kerala, with party offices organising flag-hoisting ceremonies and commemorative events to mark the occasion. The incident, however, overshadowed the celebrations in Thiruvananthapuram, as social media users and news outlets highlighted the mistake, sparking discussions about protocol and the importance of correctly performing national symbols during public events.

While Foundation Day is meant to celebrate the party's history and achievements, the misstep during the anthem drew unintended attention, leading to criticism and ridicule from observers. Party officials are yet to comment on measures to ensure such errors do not recur during future official ceremonies. The event served as a reminder of the scrutiny political parties face during high-profile celebrations.

Congress, VBA announce alliance for BMC elections

MUMBAI

After prolonged negotiations, Congress and the Vanchit Bahujan Aaghadi announced a strategic alliance for the Mumbai civic polls

After days of intense discussions and disagreements, the Indian National Congress and the Vanchit Bahujan Aaghadi (VBA), led by Prakash Ambedkar, on Sunday formally declared an alliance for the upcoming elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

As per the seat-sharing understanding reached between the two parties, the VBA will contest 62 of the total 227 seats in the Mumbai civic body. The Congress, meanwhile, is also exploring tie-ups with Left parties in select pockets of the city to further consolidate its electoral strategy.

Announcing the alliance at a joint press conference, Maharashtra Congress president Harshavardhan Sapkal said that the Congress and VBA share a common ideological foundation. Both parties are natural allies with a shared agenda of safeguarding constitutional values. Congress and the VBA, in its earlier form as Bharip Bahujan Mahasangh, had fought elections together before 1999 and achieved sweeping success in Lok Sabha polls. Unfortunately, that tradition was discontinued. I am happy to announce that we have now decided to fight the Mumbai elections in alliance, Sapkal said.

However, Mumbai Congress chief and Lok Sabha member Varsha Gaikwad and VBA president Prakash Ambedkar were unable to attend the press conference due to prior commitments, party leaders clarified.

The Congress and VBA had earlier contested the recently concluded Municipal Council and Municipal Panchayat elections together in certain districts, laying the groundwork for a broader understanding ahead of the high-stakes BMC polls.

Political observers note that the Congress is keen to consolidate its Dalit vote base across Maharashtra through this alliance, while also benefiting from the strong grassroots network of VBA workers. For the VBA, which currently has limited representation in municipal corporations, the alliance offers an opportunity to establish a foothold in major urban local bodies. VBA vice-president Dhairyavardhan Pundkar described the alliance as mutually beneficial. Had we allied earlier, the BJP would not have been able to make such inroads in Maharashtra.

Man carrying explosive on motorcycle killed after blast

BHOPAL

A 20-year-old man was killed in a powerful explosion while riding his motorcycle on the Ichhawar-Ashta road (some 55 km from Bhopal) near Ramnagar village in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district on Sunday. The blast, believed to have been caused by explosive material being carried on the vehicle, severely damaged the rider's lower body and completely destroyed the motorcycle.

The victim has been identified as Sukhram Barela, son of Dinesh Barela and a resident of Jamli village. He was travelling on his motorcycle (registration number MP 37 MN 4489) from Ichhawar towards Ramnagar when the incident occurred between 10.30 a.m. and 11 a.m. near a stone crushing machine.

Speaking to IANS, Pankaj Wadekar, the investigation officer and in charge of Ichhawar police station, said the explosion caused severe damage to the lower part of Sukhram's body, throwing it a considerable distance from the road.

No suspicious objects were found at the scene, and the area was immediately secured.

He ruled out whether the explosive was linked to any criminal activity, prima facie. Prima facie, the victim might be carrying the explosive to use in digging a well or small mining in fields or fishing activity, which people in rural areas often do, though illegally. However, we are conducting a thorough investigation and search with the help of forensic experts, he said.

Police and a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team rushed to the spot. A death intimation and inquest report have been prepared, and further legal action will depend on the forensic findings.

7-yr-old boy killed in accidental firing

MORENA

A heartbreaking incident occurred in Sanjay Nagar, Porsa town of Morena district, where a seven-year-old boy, identified as Rishabh Tomar, was killed instantly after being accidentally shot in the head by a licensed rifle handled by a 14-year-old boy during play. The victim, son of Dharamraj Singh Tomar, was playing on the second floor of the rented house with the landlord's two sons.

According to police, the landlord's 14-year-old son reportedly took down his father's licensed .315 bore rifle, which was hanging in the room, and began playing with it.

The weapon discharged suddenly, with the bullet striking Rishabh directly in the head, causing severe injuries and his immediate death. Hearing the gunshot, family members and neighbours rushed to the scene, finding Rishabh lying in a pool of blood with his head shattered.

The police were alerted, and they rushed to the scene. The boy's body was sent to the Porsa mortuary for post-mortem examination.

The rifle belonged to the landlord, a private security guard who had arrived in Porsa. He left the weapon at home before heading to his village, Dharampura. Porsa Police seized the rifle and took the landlord into custody for questioning.

T'gana govt selling industrial land worth ₹5 lakh cr: KTR

HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K.T. Rama Rao reiterated that the Congress government in Telangana is selling away 9,300 acres of industrial land worth almost Rs 5 lakh crore. The Congress Govt in Telangana is indulging in not just sale of one chunk of industrial land but 9,300 acres of land worth almost 5 Lakh crores, Rama Rao posted on 'X' while reacting to an X post by Congress MP Karti P. Chidambaram about Infosys selling its prime land in Attibele in Karnataka to Puravankara for Rs 250 crore.

Chidambaran wrote that if the land was given at a concession for a specific purpose and the land wasn't utilised for that purpose, Infosys has no right to sell it for a commercial rate today. Return the land & proceeds to the Government of Karnataka, he posted.

Reacting to this, the BRS leader reiterated his allegation that the Congress government in Telangana is selling industrial land worth Rs 5 lakh crore.

These prime lands were given by Govt at a concession for a specific purpose (employment generation) Our demand is also the same. They have no right to sell the land and make money for their kith & kin, wrote KTR.

Return the land to the Govt and put it to effective use for the benefit of people of Hyderabad and Telangana We need land for schools, hospitals, housing for poor, parks, bus stands and parking, added the former minister.

Earlier this month, KTR alleged that the Congress government in Telangana is committing a huge land scam of Rs 5 lakh crore in the name of the Hyderabad Industrial Land Transformation Policy.

Cloud cover lifts Srinagar's night temperature above freezing

SRINAGAR

Due to nightlong cloud cover, the minimum temperature in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar city rose above zero on Sunday as the Meteorological (MeT) Department forecast light rain/snow from December 30 to January 1. Srinagar city had 0.8 degrees Celsius, Gulmarg minus 2.2 and Pahalgam minus 1.8 as the minimum temperature.

Jammu city had 8.1 degrees Celsius, Katra 8.2, Batote 6.9, Banihal 4.5 and Bhaderwah 1.6 as the minimum temperature. The MeT Department has forecast cloudy weather till Monday. Light rain/snow is likely from December 30 to January 1. From December 31 and January 1, light rain/snow at many places and moderate snow in the central and northern parts of the Kashmir Valley is expected. The 40-day period of harsh winter cold known locally as the 'Chillai Kalan' started on December 21 and will end on January 30.

It is the heavy snowfall in Chillai Kalan that replenishes the perennial water reservoirs of J&K in the mountains. These perennial reservoirs sustain various rivers, streams, springs and lakes during the hot summer months. No snowfall during Chillai Kalan spells disaster as it foretells drought during the summer months.

A bountiful snowfall is, therefore, always welcome, and Kashmiris eagerly look forward to it.

As New Year's Eve revellers throng the Valley these days, all hotels in Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam are fully sold out. These revellers are also eagerly waiting for a good snowfall on New Year's Eve to make their holiday memorable. Elders in Kashmir still remember those long nights of Chillai Kalan when they would rise in the morning to see heavy snowfall outside.

KABIR SON DETAINED

Humayun Kabir's son detained over alleged assault

KOLKATA

Bharatpur MLA and suspended Trinamool Congress leader Humayun Kabir found himself at the centre of a fresh controversy on Sunday after his son, Ghulam Nabi Azad alias Sohel, was detained by police on charges of assaulting a state police constable assigned to the legislator's security.

According to police sources, personnel from the Shaktipur Police Station went to Kabir's residence in Shaktipur, located in Murshidabad district, and detained his son following a complaint lodged by the security guard. Kabir was reportedly not present at his residence at the time of the police action.

Local sources said the incident took place when Kabir was holding a meeting with party workers at his office. During the meeting, the state police constable on security duty allegedly approached Kabir seeking leave. When Kabir refused to grant permission, an argument reportedly broke out between the two. It was at this point that Kabir's son arrived at the office and allegedly assaulted the constable, who, according to sources, retaliated during the scuffle.

Following the altercation, the constable went directly to the police station and submitted a written complaint, accusing Kabir's son of assault. Acting on the complaint, police detained Ghulam Nabi Azad for questioning.

Reacting sharply to the detention, Kabir went to the Shaktipur police station to protest the action. Speaking to the media, he alleged that the security guard had entered his office without reason. Why did the security guard enter my office, and for what purpose? My son pushed him out of the office. The security guard also assaulted my son, Kabir claimed, questioning the conduct of the policeman.

Kabir further warned the police against what he termed vindictive action. He threatened to gherao the office of the Murshidabad Superintendent of Police on Thursday if any harm or indecent behaviour was shown towards his family members. I will bring Berhampur to a standstill. Let them try to stop me, he said.

QUICK READ

Lee spend first official day at Cheong Wa Dae

Seoul

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung will start his first official day at Cheong Wa Dae this week, following the return of the presidential office to the historic compound in central Seoul. The symbolic presidential flag featuring two phoenixes will be raised on Monday morning. This marks the first time the office has moved back since former President Yoon Suk Yeol relocated it in May 2022. Lee's main workspace will be in the Yeomin building complex to facilitate closer communication with staff. On Friday, Lee honored fallen public servants, emphasizing the government's responsibility to honor their sacrifices.

Man arrested after fatal stabbing in Sydney

Sydney

Police in New South Wales arrested a 47-year-old man on Sunday after a fatal stabbing in Sydney's northwest. Emergency services were called to a home in Quakers Hill at 5:00 a.m. following reports of a disturbance. Officers found a woman dead inside the house and a man on the footpath with stab wounds. The injured man was rushed to the hospital in critical condition. The suspect was arrested shortly after at a local police station. This incident follows another stabbing in November, where five teenagers were charged for attacking a store worker in Burwood.

Plane slides off runway in Finland storm

Helsinki

A commercial flight carrying around 150 people slid off the runway at Kittila Airport in Finland's Lapland region amid stormy weather. The aircraft, arriving from Geneva, came to a stop in deep snow, but thankfully, no injuries were reported. In a separate incident, a smaller plane also slid into a snowbank at the same airport with no injuries. Stormy conditions caused flight delays and disruptions in Kittila, Rovaniemi, and Ivalo, popular winter tourist spots. A storm named "Storm Hannes" brought strong winds across northern Finland, with air traffic gradually resuming later in the evening.

Balen Shah named Nepal's RSP PM candidate for 2026

Lamichhane becomes RSP's Central President, while Shah leads its parliamentary party and contests as the prime ministerial candidate

KATHMANDU

Kathmandu Mayor Balen Shah has been named the Rastriya Swatantra Party's (RSP) candidate for Nepal's next Prime Minister ahead of the parliamentary elections scheduled for March 5, 2026. The announcement follows a seven-point agreement between Shah and RSP President Rabi Lamichhane, aimed at uniting the party and sharing leadership roles.

Under the deal, Lamichhane will serve as Central President of the RSP, while Shah will lead the parliamentary party and contest as the party's prime ministerial candidate. The agreement marks a significant step for Shah, transitioning from city mayor to a potential national leader.

Both leaders emphasized political unity and reforms, aiming to strengthen the RSP's position against established parties. Shah, an architect and rapper by profession, has gained popularity among young voters for his infrastructure initiatives and outspoken stance against corruption. Lamichhane, a former media personality, also enjoys a strong youth following and has been working to bring together Gen Z leaders and new political forces.

The agreement ensures that the party will retain its name, flag, and election symbol, with the central office remaining in the Kathmandu Valley. Party responsibilities will be assigned by integrating youth activists and experienced experts, based on inclusiveness, qualifications, and public image.

Both leaders also committed to implementing deep policy, institutional, and structural reforms to achieve national objectives, aiming for economic and social advancement and transforming Nepal into a respected middle-income nation within the next decade. Political analysts believe this alliance could challenge the dominance of established parties and reshape Nepal's political landscape ahead of the elections.

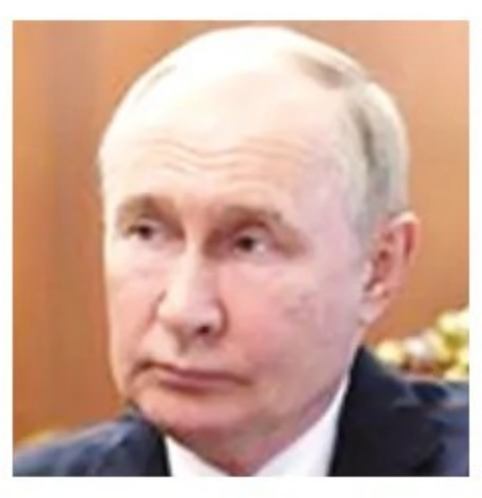
Russian President Vladimir Putin, after meeting military leaders, criticized Ukraine's leadership for delaying peaceful conflict resolution

Putin vows military action if Ukraine rejects peace pla

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that Russia would achieve all its special military operation objectives by force if Ukraine refuses to pursue peace. Speaking at a command post of the Russian Armed Forces, Putin said the establishment of a buffer zone along the Russian-Ukrainian border is progressing well, with Russian troops advancing in Donbass and the Zaporozhye region.

Putin made the statements following meetings with Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov and commanders of Russian battle groups. He received updates on the liberation of Gulyaipole in Zaporozhye and Dimitrov in the Donetsk People's Republic, highlighting ongoing military operations. The Russian president criticized Ukrainian leadership in Kiev for being "in no hurry" to resolve the conflict peacefully.



Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reiterated that territories occupied by Russia during the four-year conflict and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remain "red lines" for Ukraine. Zelenskyy stressed that any decisions on these sensitive areas would require consultation with the Ukrainian people via referendum or legislative processes.

En route to Florida for a meeting with US President Donald Trump, Zelenskyy posted on social media that Ukraine seeks to reduce unresolved issues in any future settlement. However, he emphasised that matters related to national sovereignty, territory, and the Zaporizhzhia NPP remain highly sensitive.

Zelenskyy underlined that strong security guarantees are Ukraine's top priority in any peace negotiations, signalling Kyiv's insistence on protecting territorial integrity and critical infrastructure while engaging in potential talks.

NCP faces backlash for Jamaat-e-Islami alliance talk

DHAKA

The National Citizen Party (NCP) in Bangladesh is facing internal unrest ahead of the general elections after discussions about a potential alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami sparked protests among senior leaders. Dozens of top party members have threatened to resign if the party proceeds with the partnership. NCP Member Secretary Akhtar Hossain clarified the party's position on Saturday, saying the focus of any electoral understanding is on reform and rebuilding the country. "In considering any alliance, my priority is reform, new state structure, and national development," Hossain stated on the party's official Facebook page. Despite this, dissent continues to grow.

US condemns Hindu worker killing in Bangladesh

WASHINGTON

The United States has strongly condemned the killing of Dipu Chandra Das, a Hindu garment worker in Bangladesh, calling for greater protection for religious minorities amid rising communal violence.

A spokesperson for the US State Department told that Washington "unequivocally condemns religious violence in all its forms" and welcomed steps taken by Bangladesh's interim government to ensure the safety of all communities. The spokesperson reaffirmed US support for religious freedom, freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly.

The killing of 27-year-old Das on December 18 in Bhaluka has drawn sharp criticism internationally. Das was attacked by a mob, beaten to death, and his body set ablaze following allegations of blasphemy. The incident has intensified concerns over rising attacks on minority communities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, and sparked scrutiny of the security measures in place to protect them.

US Congressman Ro Khanna described the killing as "horrific" and called for unequivocal condemnation of religious hatred. "We must speak out against these vile acts of hatred and bigotry," he said, expressing condolences to Das's family and friends.

The killing of 27-year-old Das in Bhaluka, amid blasphemy allegations, has raised international concerns over rising attacks on Bangladesh's minority communities and security measures.

Advocacy groups have highlighted a pattern of mob violence, intimidation, and vandalism targeting religious minorities in several regions of Bangladesh. The State Department emphasized that protecting minority rights and ensuring religious freedom are central to US foreign policy, with concerns raised through diplomatic channels when needed.

As Bangladesh faces growing international attention over the safety of minority communities, Washington has stressed that religious violence is unacceptable and that ensuring security for all citizens is essential for long-term social stability.

4.6 Magnitude earthquake strikes Northern Sumatra

BALI

An earthquake of magnitude 4.6 hit Northern Sumatra, Indonesia, on Sunday morning, according to the National Center for Seismology (NCS). The quake occurred at 7:45 AM IST, with a depth of 64 km, at coordinates 0.41°N and 99.75°E. This follows a series of recent earthquakes in the region, including a 4.4 magnitude quake earlier in December. Indonesia, located on the "Ring of Fire," experiences frequent seismic activity due to its position along this tectonically active zone, known for its volcanoes and earthquakes.

Fmr ISI Chief's rise, fall reflect Pak's tensions

ISLAMABAD

The dramatic rise and fall of former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt General Faiz Hameed (retd) highlights the deep structural tensions within Pakistan's civil–military system, experts say. His recent conviction and 14-year sentence mark an unusual public accountability in a country where the military has long been the most stable and influential institution.

According to Syed Eesar Mehdi, a research fellow at the International Centre for Peace Studies, Hameed's career reflects how personal loyalties, political alignment, and institutional interests intertwine. "His ascent was aided by trust and alignment with then-Prime Minister Imran Khan. His downfall came as political tides shifted, showing how loyalty can quickly become a liability," Mehdi noted.

Historically, generals falling out of favour retire quietly, shielded by institutional norms. Hameed's public prosecution, therefore, represents a significant departure from tradition and raises questions about the evolving dynamics between Pakistan's civilian authorities and military leadership.

Hameed gained prominence in the late 2010s during Imran Khan's tenure, seen by supporters as a reformist partnership, while critics labelled it political engineering. After Khan's ouster and the May 9, 2023, protests that targeted military installations, Hameed's perceived support for Khan became politically sensitive. The sentence reinforces the message that institutional loyalty outweighs personal allegiance.

Mehdi explains, "Civilian leaders often rely on military allies, while the military seeks influence without political responsibility. When these goals clash, those caught in between become expendable." Hameed's story, he adds, is less an exception than a reflection of Pakistan's systemic patterns—where accountability, loyalty, and institutional survival are continuously redefined.

This case underscores the fragile balance between civilian authority and military power, illustrating how individual careers are ultimately shaped by broader political and institutional currents.

Japan approves record defence budget plan

TOKYO

Japan has approved a draft budget for fiscal 2026, setting defence spending at a record 9.04 trillion yen (around 58 billion USD), raising concerns among the public and experts over its impact on social welfare.

The defence allocation marks a sharp increase from 5.4 trillion yen in fiscal 2022, growing by 3.6 trillion yen in just four years. Observers note that the proposed spending now rivals allocations for critical social programs, such as the 3.5 trillion yen for declining birthrate measures and 3.8 trillion yen for nursing care. Editorials in local newspapers warned that such rapid military expansion could come "at the expense of people's livelihoods."

Experts argue the budget deviates from Japan's postwar pacifist policy, which traditionally capped defence spending at about 1 percent of GDP. Atsushi Koketsu, professor emeritus at Yamaguchi University, said the plan is disappointing as it prioritizes military growth while giving insufficient attention to citizens' welfare and economic stability.

Since 2022, the government has aimed to raise total defence outlays to around 43 trillion yen through 2027 and increase defence spending to 2 percent of GDP by fiscal 2027. Annual defence budgets have climbed steadily since fiscal 2023, surpassing 6 trillion yen, 7 trillion yen, 8 trillion yen, and now reaching over 9 trillion yen.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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3	1	2	4	8	9	7	6	5
6	7	9	5	1	3	8	4	2
8	6	1	9	3	2	4	5	7
7	3	5	1	4	8	2	9	6
9	2	4	7	6	5	3	1	8

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

REFINED BORDER MEASURES

UN reaffirms control over Korean border line

SEOUL

The American-led United Nations Command (UNC) has reaffirmed its authority over the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) separating North and South Korea, following South Korea's plans to revise its border rules, according to a statement released on Sunday.

The UNC emphasized its commitment to maintaining the 1953 Armistice Agreement, including the MDL, while supporting measures to prevent escalation and promote stability in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The statement was in response to South Korea's recent internal changes aimed at refining MDL markers to reduce discrepancies and avoid accidental clashes with North Korean troops.

"The Military Demarcation Line was established in Map Volume I of the Korean Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953, after extensive negotiations," the UNC said.

Last week, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff directed troops to prioritize MDL markers in operational decisions, while also using the South Korean military map for guidance when markers are unclear. Critics argue this could favor North Korea by allowing a line drawn farther south to be used when determining border crossings.

On Seoul's proposal for military talks with Pyongyang, the UNC clarified that discussions related to the MDL must occur under its authority, as outlined in the armistice. The talks were suggested after North Korean troop activity near the MDL increased in recent months.

The UNC also referenced its long-standing role as administrator of the DMZ, highlighting Article 1 of the armistice, which grants its chief, also commander of U.S. Forces Korea, responsibility over MDL oversight and control of access via the Military Armistice Commission. Analysts say the move underscores the UNC's continuing role in maintaining inter-Korean stability amid growing tensions.

QUICK READ

Tata Group honors Ratan Tata on 88th Birth Anniversary

New Delhi

The Tata Group paid heartfelt tributes to former chairman Ratan Tata on his 88th birth anniversary, honoring his transformative influence on Indian industry and philanthropy. Tata Sons Chairman N. Chandrasekaran shared a touching message on LinkedIn, expressing how much Ratan Tata is missed. Under his leadership from 1991 to 2012, Tata Group became a global powerhouse, acquiring iconic brands like Jaguar Land Rover. Known for his ethics and nation-building efforts, Ratan Tata's work through Tata Trusts supported education and healthcare. Political leaders, including Amit Shah and Piyush Goyal, praised his vision, integrity, and compassion.

Indian startup KPro partners in 'Battle of Sexes'

Dubai

Indian startup KPro.ai has been named the Artificial Intelligence partner for the upcoming "Battle of the Sexes" exhibition match between Aryna Sabalenka and Nick Kyrgios in Dubai. This partnership is a significant achievement for the Indian sports-tech firm, which will use its AI platform to analyze player movements, reaction times, and performance in real-time without wearables. The match will showcase how AI can enhance fan experience and athlete performance. This collaboration highlights India's growing role in global sports technology, with KPro's AI offering insights that benefit both athletes and fans.

INDIA SEES $3.5 BILLION REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT

Residential real estate captured 17% of private equity inflows, with investors preferring structured deals and assured cash flows

MUMBAI

Private equity investments in India's real estate sector reached approximately $3.5 billion in 2025, according to a report released on Sunday by Knight Frank India. The study highlights steady investor interest, with capital flowing into low-risk segments offering stable income.

Office assets remained the top choice, attracting 58 percent of total investments, or about $2 billion. The report noted that confidence in office real estate stems from rental stability, institutional demand, and the sector's scale. Investment levels in offices stayed consistent with the three-year average, even as overall capital deployment moderated.

Residential real estate ranked second, capturing 17 percent of private equity inflows. Investors increasingly preferred structured and credit-led deals over pure equity, focusing on projects with assured cash flows and clear execution plans.

The slowdown in overall private equity investment in 2025 was attributed to a mismatch between capital costs, asset valuations, and exit visibility. Despite improvements in India's GDP growth, inflation, and interest rates, investor appetite for high-risk capital remained cautious. Income-focused strategies dominated investment decisions.

The warehousing and logistics sector attracted 15 percent of total investments, benefiting from the growth of e-commerce, manufacturing, and formal supply chains. However, limited availability of stabilised institutional assets and cautious approaches toward new developments constrained investment volumes.

Retail real estate saw relatively low activity, accounting for just 11 percent of total inflows. Investor interest was concentrated on high-quality retail assets with strong operating performance and clear exit prospects, while secondary malls and repositioning opportunities struggled to attract attention.

Overall, the report reflects a selective, risk-conscious approach by private equity investors in India's real estate market, with a preference for stable returns and predictable cash flows over speculative projects.

Bitcoin drops 30% from 2025 record highs

MUMBAI

Bitcoin has seen a sharp 30% drop from its record highs in 2025, with weak trading, technical issues, and continued selling by long-term holders pressuring prices. Despite the decline, optimism remains strong for the future of crypto, fueled by growing blockchain adoption, improved regulations, and increasing institutional involvement. Key developments this year included the creation of a US Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, progress on central bank digital currencies, and new regulations like the GENIUS Act, boosting confidence in stablecoins. Experts believe the foundations for long-term growth are in place, with 2026 seen as a potential turning point for the market.

Adani emphasized building indigenous AI models for India's security, investing in data centers, digital infrastructure, and clean energy

Adani urges Indian youth to lead AI revolution

AHMEDABAD

Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani on Sunday called on India's youth to take charge in the age of artificial intelligence, emphasising the need for talent, technology, and national purpose to move together. Speaking at the inauguration of Vidya Pratishthan's Sharad Pawar Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence (CoE-AI) in Baramati, Maharashtra, he urged young Indians to become builders and leaders in AI, rather than passive users.

"India's enduring strength lies in aligning people, institutions, and long-term vision. That clarity must now guide how our youth approach AI," Adani said. He highlighted that technological shifts, from industrial revolutions to India's digital transformation, have historically expanded human potential, and AI will further empower citizens from all backgrounds to contribute to growth.

Adani cautioned against relying on foreign AI models, stressing that data, decision-making, and capability must serve national interest. "Building indigenous AI models, strong compute capacity, and resilient intelligence ecosystems is essential for India's economic security, cultural confidence, and strategic freedom," he added. The Adani Group is investing heavily in data centres, digital infrastructure, and clean energy to support AI capabilities, collaborating with global technology leaders like Google and Microsoft.

The Baramati-based CoE-AI, established under Vidya Pratishthan with a Rs 25 crore contribution from Gautam Adani, aims to advance research, skill development, and industry-oriented training in AI. The centre will focus on applications in agriculture, healthcare, governance, and industry, fostering collaboration between academia and the private sector to make India a hub for AI-led growth.

Adani's address underscored the vision of a generation of skilled Indian innovators leading the country's AI future, combining technology expertise with national purpose to shape global competitiveness.

IMF approves $1.29 billion for Pak despite corruption report

NEW DELHI

Critics argue IMF loans without governance reforms risk perpetuating vulnerabilities, with little evidence of addressing corruption, leaving loans as temporary relief without sustainable growth

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a $1.29 billion loan for Pakistan even as its own report highlights deep-seated corruption and governance failures in the country. The decision comes shortly after the IMF released a 186-page "Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment," which details systemic institutional weaknesses obstructing effective use and repayment of funds.

According to the report, corruption in Pakistan is "macro-critical," embedded in the state's economic and political structures, influencing who prospers and why growth remains weak. The assessment noted that in fiscal year 2024–25, actual government spending exceeded the approved budget by Rs 9.4 trillion, five times more than the previous year, often bypassing parliamentary debate and regularised only after the fact.

The Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), designed to support infrastructure and growth, has become a graveyard of incomplete projects. With an estimated backlog of Rs 10.7 trillion and annual allocations of just Rs 1.1 trillion, it could take nearly a decade to clear unfinished projects. Chronic delays, cost overruns, and poor execution are rampant due to the lack of transparent project selection and prioritisation.

Critics argue that IMF lending without enforcing governance reforms risks perpetuating these vulnerabilities. While IMF conditions theoretically demand fiscal transparency, the report indicates little evidence that corrupt practices are being addressed. Without real institutional reforms, loans serve only as temporary relief, stabilising reserves but failing to create sustainable economic growth.

Experts warn that unless Pakistan implements verifiable anti-corruption measures, IMF support will remain a revolving door—providing funds without resolving the fundamental governance issues that threaten the country's economic future.

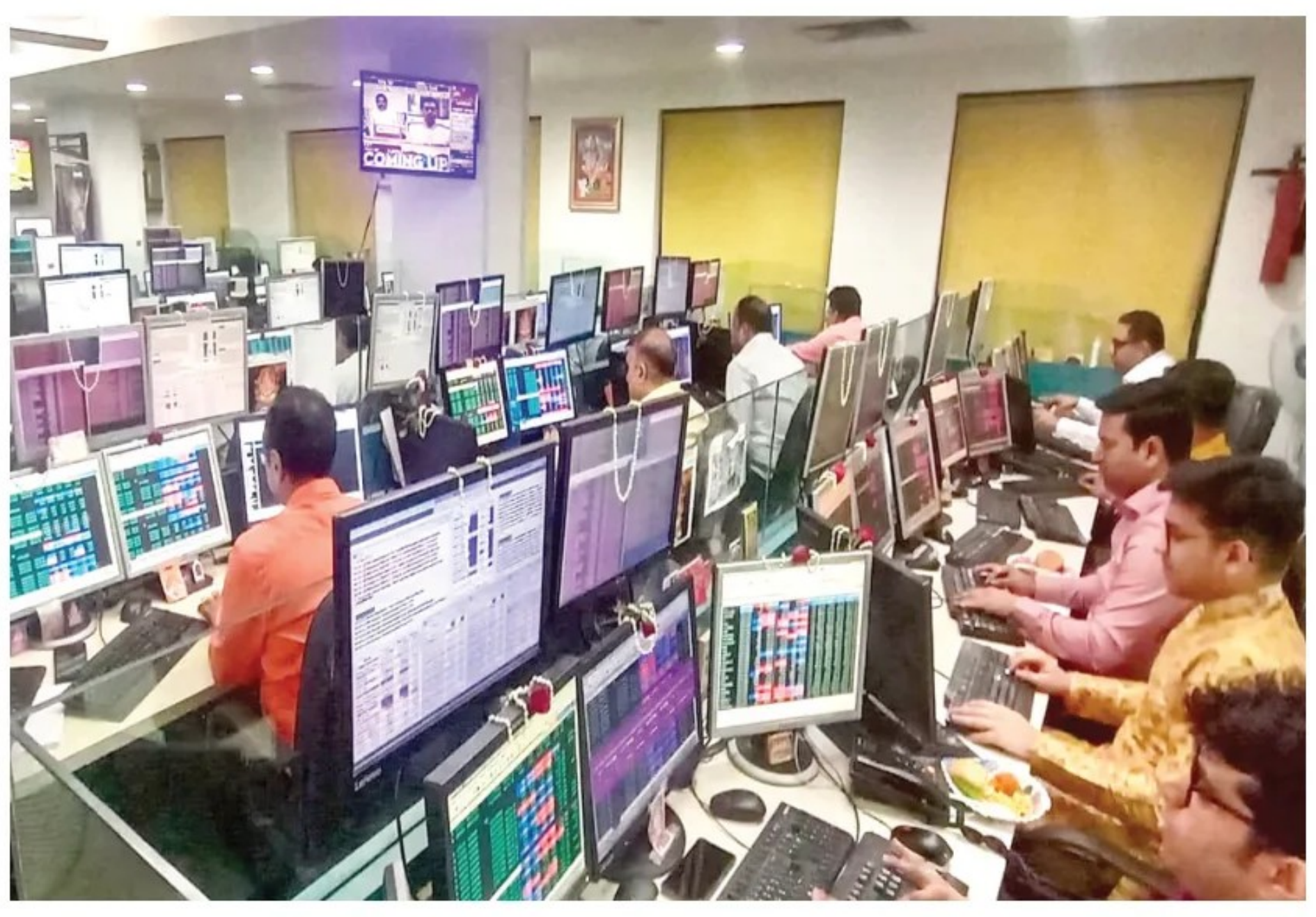
IIP data, Fed minutes, FII moves to shape markets

MUMBAI

Indian stock markets ended the week on a weaker note as investors adopted a cautious stance amid mixed global cues and the absence of fresh domestic triggers. The Sensex declined 367 points, or 0.43%, to close at 85,041.45, while the Nifty slipped 100 points, or 0.38%, to 26,042.30. Broader markets also faced pressure, with the BSE Midcap index falling 0.18% and the Smallcap index down 0.34%, reflecting subdued risk appetite.

Market participants are now looking ahead to key domestic and global developments that could influence sentiment in the coming week. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) data for November 2025, scheduled for release on December 29, will be closely monitored for signals on economic momentum. Globally, attention will turn to the US Federal Reserve, which will release the minutes of its recent FOMC meeting on December 31, offering clues on future interest rate decisions.

Foreign institutional flows and currency movement will remain crucial. The rupee weakened 19 paise to close at 89.90 against the dollar. Analysts expect markets to remain range-bound, with Nifty support at 26,000–25,800 and resistance at 26,200–26,500.



Jefferies boosts India, Taiwan in Asia-Pacific portfolio shift

NEW DELHI

Global investment bank Jefferies has increased its allocation to India and Taiwan in its Asia Pacific ex-Japan relative-return portfolio, while trimming exposure to China and Indonesia, reflecting evolving macroeconomic conditions and growth prospects in the region.

In its latest strategy note, Jefferies said the weightings of India and Taiwan were raised by one percentage point each, funded by corresponding reductions in China and Indonesia. India's recommended weighting in the portfolio is now 17%, highlighting confidence in its resilient domestic demand, infrastructure-led growth, and improving corporate balance sheets. Taiwan's allocation was also increased, supported by strong global demand for advanced semiconductors and its pivotal role in high-end chip manufacturing.

The reduction in China and Indonesia weightings comes amid heightened uncertainty regarding China's economic recovery and policy trajectory and a more selective investment landscape in other Asian markets.

Beyond the Asia Pacific portfolio, Jefferies also updated its global and international equity portfolios, replacing Bank Central Asia with Samsung Electronics, reflecting a strategic tilt toward large-cap technology exposure.

Jefferies emphasized that these portfolio adjustments are part of its periodic review process, considering macroeconomic developments, central bank policy expectations, and stock-specific factors. The firm noted that weightings may continue to evolve in response to global economic trends and market conditions.

Bajaj Finance loses over ₹5,100 crore in market value

MUMBAI

Bajaj Finance saw a significant drop in its market value, losing Rs 5,102.43 crore this week, bringing its total valuation to Rs 6,22,124.01 crore. The fall is part of a larger decline for seven of India's top-10 companies, which together lost Rs 35,439.36 crore in market cap. State Bank of India suffered the biggest loss at Rs 12,692.1 crore, while other firms like Larsen & Toubro and ICICI Bank also saw declines. However, HDFC Bank, Infosys, and Bharti Airtel posted gains.

17 Tier-2 city startups receive govt grants and investments

NEW DELHI

Seventeen startups from tier-2 cities received government grants and investments, highlighting India's growing innovation ecosystem outside major metropolitan hubs. The announcement came at the 'Think Salem 2025' startup conclave in Tamil Nadu.

Twelve startups incubated at the DST-supported Sona Inclusive Technology Business Incubator (i-TBI) received grant agreements worth Rs 50 lakh under the DST–NIDHI initiative, aimed at advancing their business ideas. Additionally, five startups received Rs 60 lakh through the Startup India Seed Fund at Sona Incubations.

The funded startups operate across diverse sectors including healthcare devices, mobility platforms, sustainability, drones, food innovation, and applied deep-tech, reflecting the growing maturity of the Salem-based startup ecosystem.

The initiative reflects a focus on public utility and scalable innovation, with founders coming from Salem, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tirupur, Trichy, Hosur, Kanyakumari, and Hyderabad. Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) range from early proof-of-concept to advanced prototype validation.

Experts emphasized that AI and technology solutions will increasingly permeate everyday life, and the future belongs to startups that redesign problems, personalize solutions, and build skills rather than merely chasing big-city addresses.

Dr T.S. Rao, Senior Advisor (Retd.), Union Department of Biotechnology, highlighted the importance of taking lab ideas to society through quality, scale, and public–private partnerships, ensuring that innovation translates into real-world impact.

Key startups include

- **NervePro (Salem):** Affordable, portable nerve-monitoring system for high-risk ENT and skull-base surgeries, currently at proof-of-concept validation stage.
- **IswiftPro–Min-Sakthi (Tamil Nadu)**: AI- and IoT-enabled solution for appliance-level energy monitoring, forecasting, and smart billing.
- **DroneTribes (Salem):** Indigenously designed drones for agriculture, security, and training, at TRL 6 with working prototypes and field deployments.
- **Cabocab (Kanyakumari):** Ride-hailing platform for Tier-3 cities, improving last-mile connectivity, at TRL 9.

ELECTRIC AGRICULTURE REVOLUTION

India unveils safety standard for electric tractors

NEW DELHI

The Union Government has released a new Indian Standard for electric agricultural tractors to ensure safety, reliability, and performance across the country. The 'Electric Agricultural Tractors — Test Code' (IS 19262:2025) was unveiled by Union Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Sunday and has been developed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

The standard provides uniform testing protocols for electric tractors, covering areas such as PTO power, drawbar power, belt and pulley performance, vibration measurement, and component inspections. It draws on existing tractor test codes and automotive standards, adapted for electric applications. Implementation through authorised testing institutes is expected to boost adoption of electric tractors, encourage innovation in clean agricultural technology, and reduce emissions.

Electric tractors use battery-powered motors instead of diesel engines, offering lower emissions, reduced noise, and decreased maintenance. They provide a healthier working environment for farmers and help cut operating costs. With advancements in battery and motor technologies, these tractors are increasingly capable of replacing conventional diesel-powered machines.

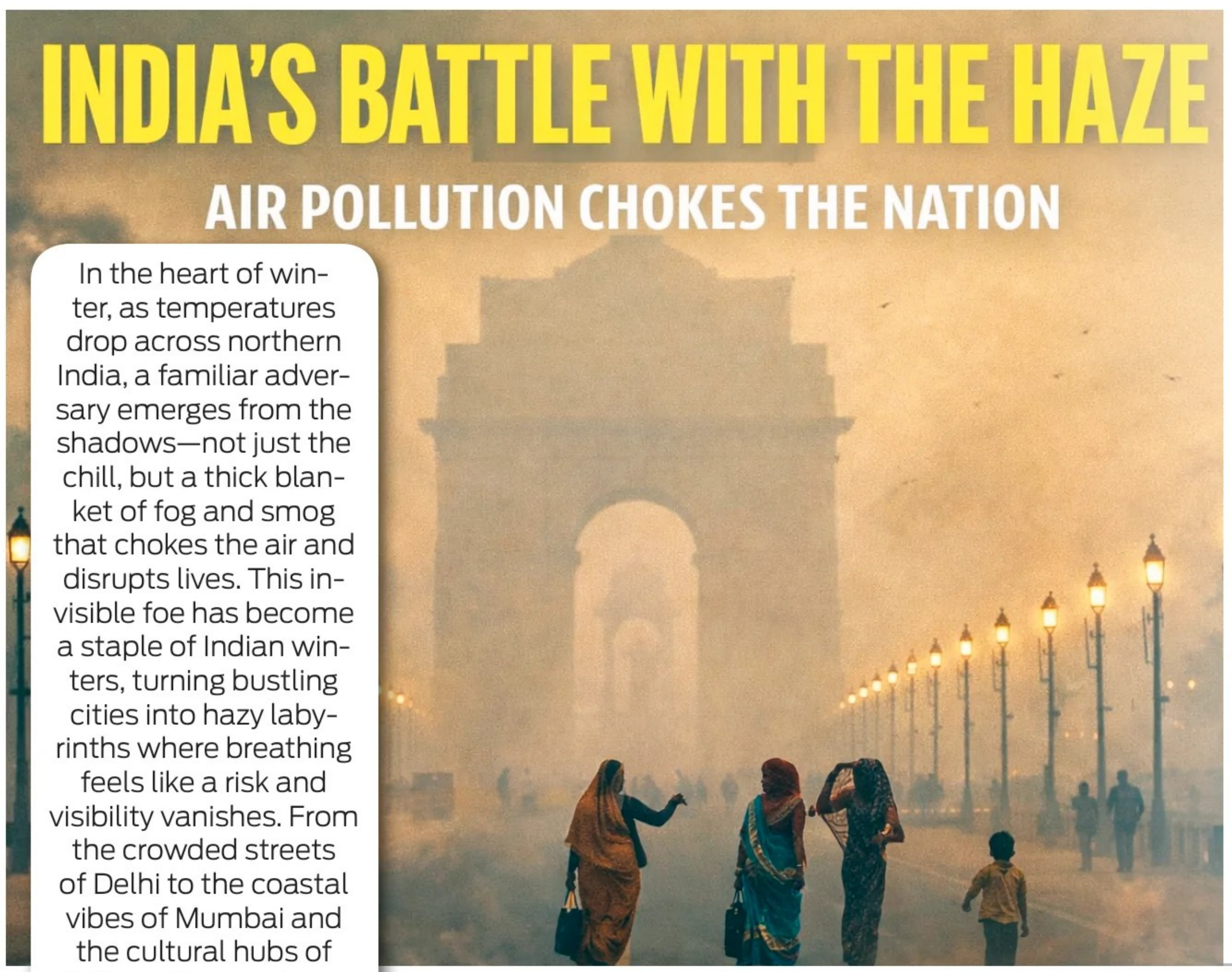
Before this standard, the absence of harmonised testing procedures made it difficult to assess electric tractors consistently. IS 19262:2025 addresses this by providing a structured approach for performance and safety evaluation, supporting manufacturers in delivering reliable machines and giving farmers confidence in their capabilities.

The development of the standard involved contributions from manufacturers, research institutes, certification agencies, and government bodies, including the ICAR-Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering, Central Farm Machinery Training and Testing Institute, and the Tractor and Mechanisation Association.

While the standard is voluntary, it marks a major step in formalising India's approach to emerging electric mobility in agriculture, aligning domestic practices with international trends and supporting sustainable farm mechanisation for the future.

INDIA'S BATTLE WITH THE HAZE

AIR POLLUTION CHOKES THE NATION



In the heart of winter, as temperatures drop across northern India, a familiar adversary emerges from the shadows—not just the chill, but a thick blanket of fog and smog that chokes the air and disrupts lives. This invisible foe has become a staple of Indian winters, turning bustling cities into hazy labyrinths where breathing feels like a risk and visibility vanishes. From the crowded streets of Delhi to the coastal vibes of Mumbai and the cultural hubs of Kolkata, the combination of pollution and weather patterns is wreaking havoc. But it's more than just a seasonal nuisance; it's a crisis touching health, safety, economy, and daily routines. This feature delves into the multifaceted impacts, drawing on the realities faced by millions, and explores paths toward clearer tomorrows.

The Silent Killer: How Fog and Smog Are Affecting Air Quality in Indian Cities

Winter in India brings a deadly mix: cold air traps pollutants close to the ground, while fog acts like a lid, preventing dispersion. In major cities, this leads to a sharp decline in air quality. Delhi, often the epicenter, sees its Air Quality Index soaring to hazardous levels, frequently hitting 500 or more during peak months. Fine particles, known as PM2.5, spike well beyond safe limits—sometimes reaching 107 to 130 micrograms per cubic meter, far exceeding national standards of 60 and global guidelines of much lower.

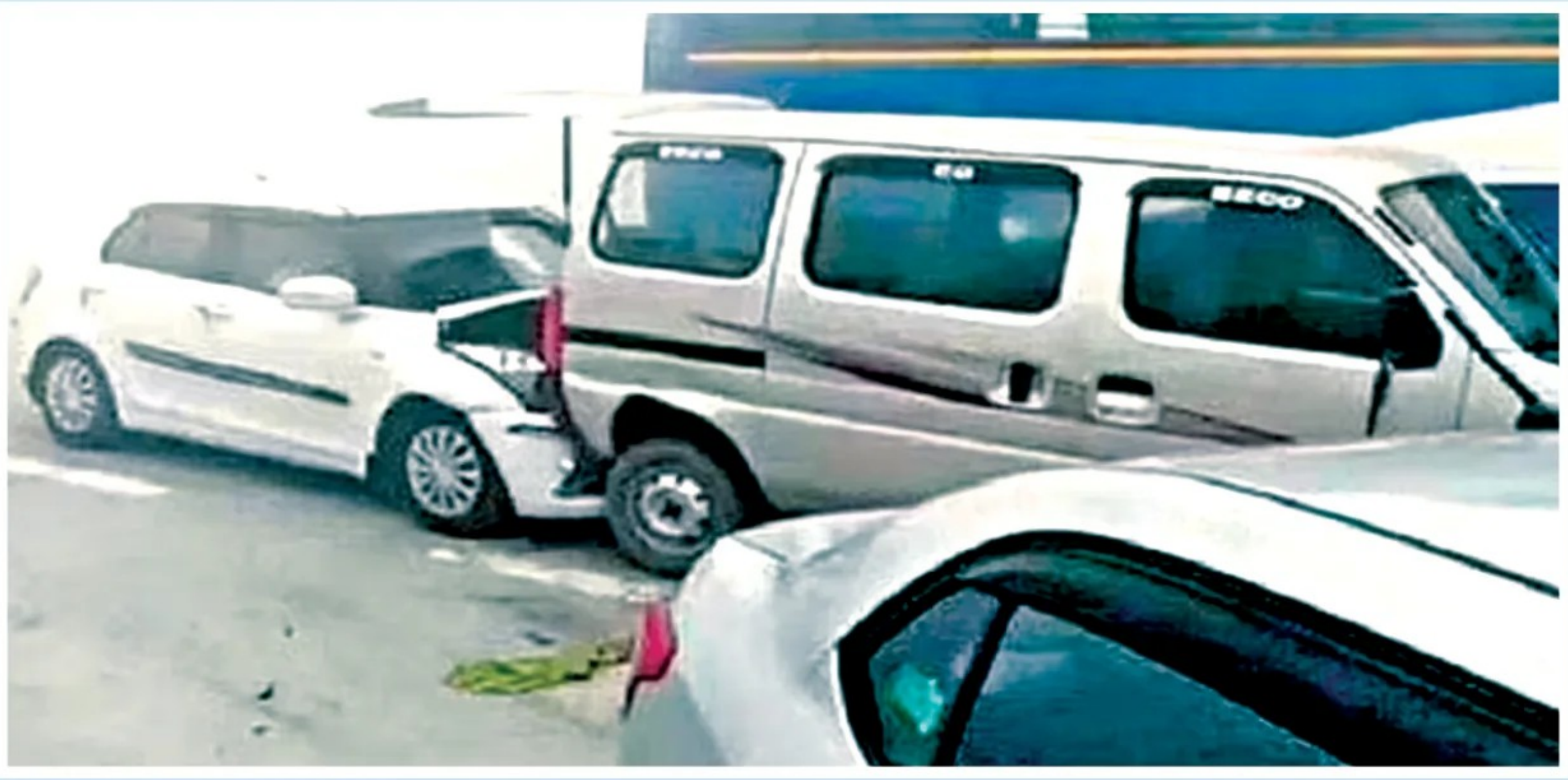
Mumbai and Kolkata aren't spared either. These coastal metropolises, though less foggy, grapple with smog from traffic, industries, and construction dust. Over the last decade, no major Indian city has consistently met safe air quality benchmarks. Satellite data reveals persistent pollution hotspots, with Delhi topping the list as the most affected. The long-term toll on citizens is grim: prolonged exposure heightens risks of chronic illnesses, cutting lives short and straining healthcare systems. Imagine a family in Delhi waking to a gray dawn, the sun obscured, knowing each breath carries invisible threats. This isn't just data; it's the daily reality for urban dwellers, where clean air feels like a luxury.

The deterioration stems from multiple sources: vehicle emissions, stubble burning in nearby farmlands, and industrial fumes. When dense fog rolls in, it amplifies these, creating a toxic cocktail that lingers for days. Recent winters have shown no improvement, with cities like Delhi slipping back into "very poor" categories even after brief respites. Health experts warn that this ongoing exposure could lead to an epidemic of respiratory issues, affecting children and the elderly most severely. As one resident put it, living here means adapting to a world where the air itself turns against you.

AVIATION SAFETY IN INDIA: HOW FOG AND SMOG ARE DISRUPTING AIRLINES AND CAUSING DELAYS

The skies over India turn treacherous in winter, with fog and smog slashing visibility to near zero. Airports, especially in the north, become hotspots for chaos. Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, a major hub, often bears the brunt: hundreds of flights get delayed or canceled weekly during peak fog seasons. Reduced visibility forces pilots to rely on instruments, but even then, operations slow to a crawl. Airlines like IndiGo and Air India issue advisories, warning passengers of potential disruptions in cities such as Chandigarh, Patna, and Amritsar. In one recent spell, over 270 flights were delayed and 10 canceled in a single day. The issue isn't just inconvenience; it's safety. Low visibility increases risks during takeoff and landing, prompting strict protocols. To counter this, technologies like Category III Instrument Landing Systems (ILS) allow operations in low visibility. Airports deploy advanced radar and GPS navigation to guide planes safely. Yet, when smog thickens the fog, even these struggle. Passengers endure long waits, missed connections, and frustration. For business travelers, this means lost opportunities; for families, disrupted holidays. The aviation sector invests heavily in mitigation, but nature's haze often wins the round.

Winter fog and smog cripple Indian airports, delaying flights and testing safety systems, leaving passengers stranded despite advanced landing technology and strict aviation protocols.



Key Risk Areas

- Highways in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana see the most incidents due to frequent fog.

Prevention Tips

- Use low-beam headlights, maintain distance, and heed weather alerts. Authorities respond with patrols offering aid like tea to drowsy drivers, but the toll rises yearly.

Smog-Related Accidents: A Growing Concern on Indian Highways

On India's highways, winter transforms roads into danger zones. Dense fog and smog cut visibility, leading to a spike in accidents, especially in northern states. Multi-vehicle pile-ups have become alarmingly common, with speed and poor judgment turning minor incidents into tragedies. Recent data shows thousands of crashes annually in December and January, many fatal. In one incident on a major expressway, low visibility caused a chain reaction, claiming lives and injuring dozens. Fatigue compounds the issue, as drivers push through hazy conditions without adequate rest. Winter fog and smog turn Indian highways deadly, slashing visibility and triggering frequent accidents. Northern states report sharp rises in multi-vehicle pile-ups, with fatigue and speeding worsening risks. Recent incidents on expressways highlight how poor visibility quickly escalates minor crashes into fatal tragedies during peak winter months.

How Smog is Contributing to Respiratory and Heart Diseases in India

Smog isn't just a visual blight; it's a health hazard fueling a surge in diseases. Inhaling polluted air is akin to smoking dozens of cigarettes daily, inflaming lungs and straining hearts. Respiratory ailments like asthma and bronchitis skyrocket, while cardiovascular risks, including strokes and heart attacks, climb steadily. Millions succumb yearly to pollution-related illnesses, making it India's top health threat since recent pandemics. In cities like Mumbai, PM2.5 levels trigger chronic conditions, affecting all ages. Long-term exposure weakens immune systems, leading to cancers and neurological issues.

Vulnerable groups—children, seniors, and those with pre-existing conditions—suffer most. Hospitals report influxes during smog peaks, with cases of COPD and lung cancer rising. It's a slow-burning crisis, where daily exposure accumulates into lifelong burdens. Smog is more than an eyesore; it is a serious public health crisis. Breathing polluted air is comparable to smoking several cigarettes daily, damaging lungs and stressing the heart. Respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, and COPD rise sharply during smog episodes, while risks of heart attacks and strokes increase steadily. Long-term exposure weakens immunity and is linked to cancers and neurological disorders. Cities like Mumbai frequently record dangerous PM2.5 levels, affecting people of all ages. Children, the elderly, and those with existing illnesses suffer the most. Hospitals see patient surges during peak smog periods, underscoring India's growing pollution-driven health emergency.

- Smog severely harms health, increasing asthma, bronchitis, heart disease, and stroke risks across urban and rural India.
- Long-term exposure weakens immunity and is linked to cancers and neurological disorders, affecting all age groups.
- Children, elderly, and patients with existing illnesses suffer most, overwhelming hospitals during peak smog periods.

Sector Impacts

- Manufacturing slows due to health-related downtime; services lag from transport delays.

Overall Cost

- Equivalent to a significant portion of GDP, hampering growth.Daily productivity dips as fog hampers logistics, underscoring the need for cleaner air to fuel economic progress.

FOG AND SMOG: AN INVISIBLE THREAT TO INDIA'S ECONOMY

Beyond health, fog and smog erode India's economic fabric. Annual losses reach billions from reduced productivity, absenteeism, and premature deaths. Businesses face disruptions as workers fall ill or commute slowly through haze. Tourism takes a hit: Foggy winters deter visitors to landmarks like the Taj Mahal, with cancellations spiking. Agriculture suffers too—smog reduces crop yields by blocking sunlight and depositing toxins. Fog and smog are quietly draining India's economy. Each year, billions are lost due to reduced productivity, rising healthcare costs, and premature deaths linked to air pollution. Offices and factories face frequent absenteeism as workers fall ill or struggle with slow, unsafe commutes. Tourism also suffers, especially in winter, as poor visibility discourages visits to iconic sites like the Taj Mahal, leading to cancellations and revenue losses. Agriculture is not spared; polluted air blocks sunlight, damages crops, and lowers yields. Together, these impacts weaken livelihoods, strain public resources, and slow economic growth, making air pollution not just an environmental issue but a serious economic threat.

Airline Innovations in Fog and Smog Management

Indian airlines are innovating to combat haze. Advanced AI and predictive analytics at Delhi Airport forecast fog, minimizing disruptions.

CAT-III systems enable landings in near-zero visibility.

Specialized crews trained in low-visibility ops, plus GPS navigation, enhance safety.

Initiatives like Winter Fog Experiment models boost accuracy, saving lives and reducing delays. Indian airlines and airports are adopting advanced innovations to tackle winter haze and fog.

At Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, artificial intelligence and predictive analytics help forecast fog conditions, allowing better planning and reduced disruptions. Category III Instrument Landing Systems (CAT-III ILS) enable aircraft to land safely in near-zero visibility, maintaining operations during dense fog. Airlines deploy specially trained flight crews skilled in low-visibility procedures, while enhanced GPS-based navigation improves precision and safety.

Collaborative efforts such as the Winter Fog Experiment use advanced weather models to improve forecast accuracy. Together, these measures help save lives, limit delays, reduce cancellations, and improve passenger confidence during India's challenging winter aviation season.

- AI-driven fog forecasting helps airports plan operations and reduce winter flight disruptions.
- Long-term exposure weakens immunity and is linked to cancers and neurological disorders, affecting all age groups.
- Trained crews and GPS navigation enhance safety, cutting delays and cancellations.

Nearly 1,500 participants, including Olympians and Arjuna Awardees, united to promote health, community, and an active lifestyle

FIT INDIA CYCLE EVENT ENDS YEAR ON HIGH

KOLKATA

The final Fit India Sundays on Cycle event of 2025 concluded in Kolkata with a colourful, high-energy fitness festival that brought together athletes, officials and citizens in large numbers. Held at the Sports Authority of India's Kolkata Regional Centre, the special year-end edition marked the 54th chapter of the nationwide fitness movement.

Nearly 1,500 participants turned the venue into a lively celebration of health and community spirit. Cyclists of all ages, including students, working professionals, security personnel and senior citizens, joined hands to promote an active lifestyle. The presence of Olympians and Arjuna Awardees from Bengal added inspiration and excitement to the event.

The programme was inaugurated by celebrated archers Deepika Kumari and Mangal Singh Champia, along with shooter Joydeep Karmakar. Other noted sportspersons, including Atanu Das, Rahul Banerjee, Bombayla Devi Laishram and Susmita Singha Roy, also took part, encouraging participants through their presence.

Deepika Kumari highlighted the importance of regular fitness, saying that strength and energy are essential not only for sport but for everyday life. She expressed happiness at seeing such a large turnout and stressed that fitness should be a daily habit, not limited to special events.

Joydeep Karmakar said initiatives like Sundays on Cycle help people reduce screen time and build disciplined routines. He noted that simple behavioural changes can lead to healthier lifestyles and shared that over 20 lakh people across India have joined the movement in the past year.

The event featured cycling, Zumba, yoga displays, rope-skipping, folk music and other activities that kept energy levels high despite the winter chill. Local cycling clubs and state champions were also honoured during the programme. Simultaneous events were held at thousands of locations nationwide, reflecting the growing reach of the Fit India movement, which continues to encourage fitness and eco-friendly transport across the country.

Aston Villa match Chelsea to set 11th win record

Villa's win moves them to third, just three points behind Arsenal ahead of Tuesday's clash. Chelsea drops outside top four, needing a response in upcoming matches

LONDON

Aston Villa completed a dramatic comeback against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge, equalling the club's record of 11 consecutive Premier League victories. Ollie Watkins, introduced off the bench, played a pivotal role, first scoring the equaliser and then heading in the winner from a Youri Tielemans corner with just seven minutes remaining.

Chelsea had dominated the opening half, taking the lead through Joao Pedro, and Villa struggled to create chances. Manager Unai Emery admitted his side faced difficulties but praised the team's resilience and discipline, which paid off after the break. Watkins' introduction injected energy and turned the momentum in Villa's favour, allowing them to seize control in the second half.

The win moves Villa to third place in the table, just three points behind leaders Arsenal ahead of their crucial clash at the Emirates Stadium on Tuesday. Chelsea, meanwhile, slipped three points outside the top four, leaving them needing a response in their next matches.

Emery said after the game, "We kept the same game plan as the first half. They were dominating, but we stayed disciplined. We needed to be passionate and resilient, and the team responded." Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca reflected on his side's missed opportunities, noting, "We dominated for an hour, but after conceding, the game's dynamic changed. By the time they equalised, we should have scored two or three more."

Villa's 11-game winning streak now matches historic club records set in 1897 and 1914, highlighting one of the team's most remarkable periods. With confidence high, Emery's side will look to continue the streak and challenge for the Premier League summit in the coming weeks.

Necas, MacKinnon lead Avalanche past Knights

LAS VEGAS

Martin Necas scored twice in regulation and again in the shootout, while Nathan MacKinnon added a decisive goal, helping the Colorado Avalanche edge the Vegas Golden Knights 6-5. Mitch Marner scored the lone shootout goal for Vegas in the high-scoring affair.

The victory extended Colorado's winning streak to seven games and continued their remarkable consistency, having earned points in 27 of their last 28 games. The Avalanche, now 23-1-4 over that stretch, improved to 9-1-2 in their last 12 road contests and remain the only NHL team with at least 60 points, topping the Central Division with 63.

Vegas struggled to hold leads, twice surrendering two-goal advantages as Colorado rallied to tie in the second and third periods. Colton Sissons briefly gave the Knights the lead with four minutes remaining, but Artturi Lehkonen's late goal at 1:57 tied the game and sent it to overtime. Vegas, which has been less effective in extra time this season, is now 4-11 in overtime, including 1-5 in shootouts.

The Golden Knights, despite the loss, earned a point for the 10th time in 12 games, moving into sole possession of first place in the Pacific Division with 45 points, just ahead of Anaheim and Edmonton.

Fresno State crushes Miami (Ohio) with defense

TUCSON

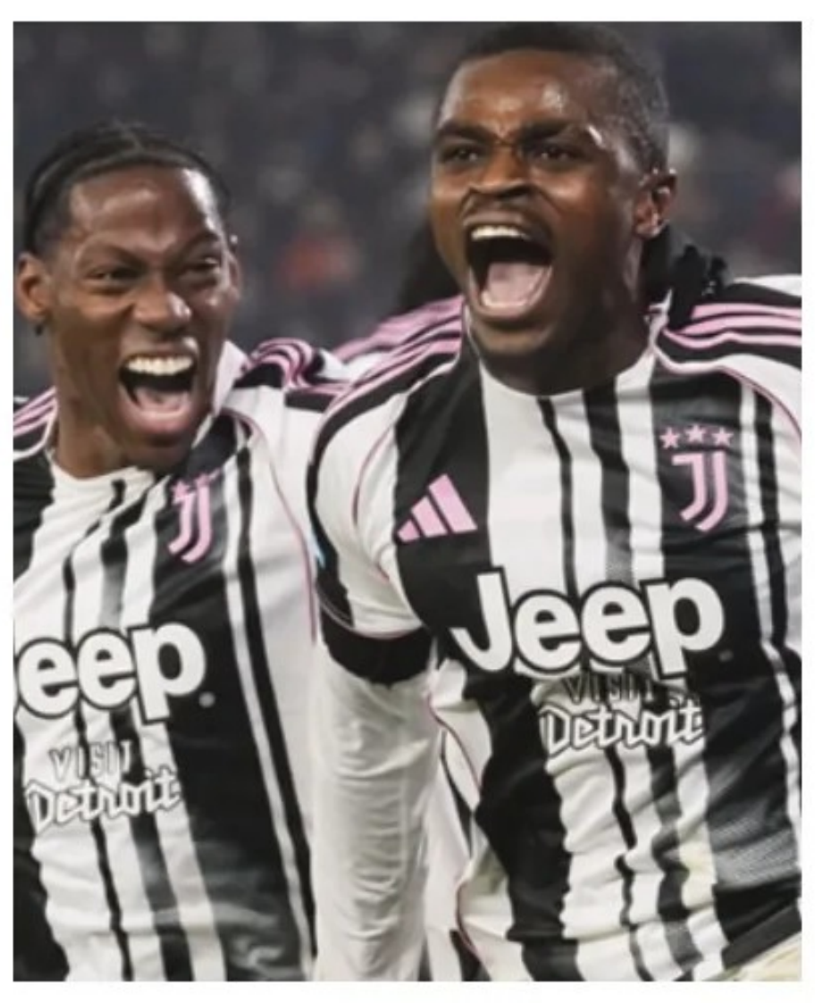
Fresno State relied on a stout defense and steady quarterback play to defeat Miami (Ohio) 18-3 in the Arizona Bowl. The Bulldogs limited the RedHawks to just 192 total yards, showcasing why they entered the game with the 14th-best defense in the nation.

E.J. Warner, son of NFL Hall of Famer Kurt Warner, threw for 214 yards and one touchdown, completing 16 of 23 passes without turning the ball over. Wide receiver Josiah Freeman caught seven passes for 143 yards, helping Fresno State maintain offensive momentum throughout the game.

Miami (Ohio) struggled to generate offense, with freshman quarterback Thomas Gotkowski completing only six of 22 passes for 72 yards and throwing one interception. Star running back Jordan Brunson, who had accumulated 724 yards this season, was held to 43 yards on nine carries. Keith Reynolds led the RedHawks' ground attack with 46 rushing yards.

The scoring began early with a 33-yard field goal from Dom Dzioban, giving Miami an initial 3-0 lead. Fresno State responded with three field goals from Dylan Lynch in the first half to take a 9-3 lead at halftime. The decisive touchdown came late in the fourth quarter, when Warner capped a 13-play, 70-yard drive by connecting with Richie Anderson III for a 2-yard score, extending the advantage to 15-3. Lynch added a final field goal with under three minutes remaining to make it 18-3.

Fresno State first-year coach Matt Entz earned a $45,000 bonus for the team's ninth victory and the Arizona Bowl win, adding to previous bonuses for the season. The Bulldogs' defensive dominance and timely scoring ensured a convincing finish, capping a successful season in Entz's debut year at the helm.



Kalulu, Yildiz secure Juventus third straight win

ROME

Juventus continued their resurgence in Serie A with a 2-0 victory over newly promoted Pisa, marking their third consecutive league win. Late goals from Pierre Kalulu and Kenan Yildiz sealed the triumph, lifting the Bianconeri to third place, four spots higher than when Luciano Spalletti took over as manager two months ago. The match proved challenging as Pisa twice struck the woodwork, threatening an upset. Juventus' breakthrough came after Edon Zeghrova energized the attack following his introduction just after the hour mark, creating space down the left flank that allowed Kalulu to finish a swift counterattack from close range. Yildiz then wrapped up the victory in stoppage time with another close-range finish.

Texans secure third straight playoff spot

INGLEWOOD

The Houston Texans have clinched a third consecutive playoff berth for the first time in franchise history after a hard-fought 20-16 victory over the Los Angeles Chargers. Quarterback C.J. Stroud threw two long touchdown passes on Houston's opening drives, setting the tone for a crucial win that keeps the team in contention for the AFC South title.

The Texans, now 11-5, are riding an eight-game winning streak, their longest since a nine-game run in 2018. Their defensive unit, ranked among the NFL's best, played a key role in holding the Chargers to just 16 points in a closely contested matchup.

"It's what you fight for during the season, for an opportunity to be in the playoffs and go win it all," said Texans head coach DeMeco Ryans. "We earned that. It wasn't given to us. Our guys went out and earned it."

Rookie wide receiver Jaylin Noel praised the team's momentum and focus, noting that consistent effort and internal competition have helped drive the winning streak. "Any time you can stack wins like this is special," he said. "The coaches are pushing us to get better, and everybody in the locker room is pushing to get better."

With the playoff berth secured, Houston looks to carry its momentum into the postseason, aiming for a deep run and a possible first-ever appearance in the AFC Championship Game.

The Texans' combination of high-powered offense and stingy defense has made them one of the league's most formidable teams heading into the final stretch of the season.

Yuvraj Sandhu Creates History with Record Seventh Title at Tata Open 2025

JAMSHEDPUR

Yuvraj Sandhu signed off the 2025 PGTI season in unforgettable fashion by clinching a record seventh title with a thrilling one-shot victory at the Tata Open in Jamshedpur. The 28-year-old, who had already secured the PGTI Order of Merit crown earlier this month, once again underlined his dominance with a superb final-round performance at the season-ending event.

Starting the day as an overnight joint leader, Sandhu carded a flawless six-under 65 to finish at an impressive 20-under 264 across four rounds. His round was highlighted by a nerveless 15-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole, which proved decisive in sealing the title at the INR 2 crore tournament played across the Beldih and Golmuri Golf Courses.

With this victory, the Chandigarh-based golfer set a new PGTI record for the most wins in a single season, surpassing the previous mark of six. He also secured his DP World Tour card for 2026 by topping the PGTI Rankings. The Tata Open win earned Sandhu a cheque of INR 30 lakh, taking his season's earnings to a staggering INR 1.91 crore — the highest ever in PGTI history.

Young Shubham Jaglan finished a close second at 19-under after a bogey-free final round, marking an impressive runner-up finish in only his third PGTI appearance. Khalin Joshi and Veer Ahlawat shared third place.

Reflecting on his achievement, Sandhu called it his best season so far and expressed excitement about taking the next step on the DP World Tour, crediting his team's hard work for his remarkable success.

Packers hit by multiple injuries against Ravens

GREEN BAY

The Green Bay Packers suffered a major injury blow during their Week 17 clash with the Baltimore Ravens, losing at least five key players before the fourth quarter. Head coach Matt LaFleur expressed concern as his already thin roster was further depleted.

The game quickly turned challenging on defense and special teams. Safety Zayne Anderson left early with an ankle injury and was ruled out. Defensive tackle Jordon Riley followed, carted off with an Achilles injury and unable to return.

The Packers' struggles continued after halftime. Wide receiver Dontayvion Wicks was sidelined with a concussion, while cornerback Nate Hobbs suffered a knee injury in a collision and could not continue. Moments later, cornerback Kamal Hadden injured his ankle while defending a run by Derrick Henry and was also ruled out.

These injuries compounded an already strained squad. Green Bay entered the matchup missing several starters on injured reserve, including Micah Parsons, Devonte Wyatt, Elgton Jenkins, Tucker Kraft, Nick Niemann, John FitzPatrick, and Kristian Welch. Quarterback Jordan Love remained sidelined in concussion protocol from the previous week's game in Chicago.

With losses across both offense and defense, the Packers now face serious depth challenges in their final regular-season games. LaFleur's team must rely on backups like Malik Willis at quarterback and reserves at wide receiver, cornerback, and defensive tackle to maintain competitiveness.

The flurry of injuries underscores the physical toll the season has taken on Green Bay. With playoff implications looming, the team will need careful management, adjustments in rotations, and contributions from less-experienced players to navigate the remaining schedule successfully.

The Packers will hope to limit further setbacks while preparing for their next match, as depth and resilience will be crucial to salvaging the season amid a mounting injury crisis.

Towns, Brunson power Knicks past Hawks

ATLANTA

Karl-Anthony Towns scored a season-high 36 points and grabbed 16 rebounds, while Jalen Brunson added 34 points to lead the New York Knicks to a narrow 128-125 victory over the Atlanta Hawks. The win extended New York's resilience on the road and left the struggling Hawks with a sixth consecutive loss, finishing a disappointing 0-5 homestand.

Towns was nearly perfect from the free-throw line, making 17 of 18 attempts, and helped the Knicks dominate the boards 56-38. Brunson provided steady scoring throughout the game, keeping New York ahead despite a late Atlanta rally. Atlanta's Nickeil Alexander-Walker briefly gave the Hawks a 125-124 lead with a steal and basket with 48 seconds remaining, but OG Anunoby sank two free throws to regain the lead for New York. He then sealed the win with another pair of free throws after stealing a pass from Trae Young in the closing moments.

BRETT LEE honoured with Aus cricket immortality

Lee, at 49, is regarded as one of cricket's fastest bowlers with 718 wickets across formats

MELBOURNE

Former Australian fast bowler Brett Lee has been inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame, marking a proud moment in the history of the game. The honour recognises his outstanding international career, defined by raw pace, consistency and strong sportsmanship.

At 49, Lee is widely regarded as one of the fastest bowlers cricket has ever seen, often compared with Pakistan great Shoaib Akhtar. He represented Australia between 1999 and 2012 and played 76 Test matches, 221 One-Day Internationals and 25 T20 Internationals. Across all formats, he claimed an impressive 718 international wickets.

In Test cricket, Lee took 310 wickets, while his limited-overs record included 221 wickets in ODIs and 38 in T20Is. Beyond numbers, his ability to regularly clock speeds above 160 kmph made him one of the most feared bowlers of his generation. Yet, he was also admired for blending pace with control and skill.

Lee played a key role in Australia's golden era, being part of three World Cup-winning teams in 1999, 2003 and 2007. He also featured in several Ashes series, contributing to Australia's dominance during that period.

A pioneer of the early T20 era, Lee played for teams around the world and was a member of the Sydney Sixers squad that won the first Big Bash League title. He was named Australian Test Player of the Year in 2008 after receiving the Allan Border Medal.

Chair of the Hall of Fame Peter King said Lee's impact went beyond statistics, praising him as a global ambassador for cricket. Now a commentator, Lee continues to give back to the sport, inspiring fans worldwide.

WORLD BOXING CUP FINALS
GREATER NOIDA 2025

A defining year for India's sporting rise

NEW DELHI

Former athletes credit steady institutional support for the rise, with improved facilities, coaching, funding, and grassroots programs helping athletes in boxing, badminton, athletics, and more

The year 2025 will be remembered as a landmark period for Indian sport, as athletes across disciplines delivered strong performances and fans showed deeper emotional connection with games beyond cricket.

India saw progress not only in medals and rankings, but also in confidence, professionalism and public support for Olympic and non-Olympic sports. This shift reflected a growing belief that the country can succeed on multiple global stages.

Former athletes and experts credit steady institutional backing for this rise. Improved training facilities, better coaching, grassroots programmes and focused funding helped sportspersons prepare more effectively and compete with confidence. Boxing, wrestling, shooting, badminton, athletics, chess and other disciplines benefited, while cricket continued to draw mass attention.

World Championship medallist Gaurav Bidhuri described the year as special. He said government support has lifted standards and believes the coming seasons will bring even bigger moments with major international events ahead. His words echoed the mood across the sporting community.

Para sports also saw meaningful growth during the year. Increased investment, visibility and access to infrastructure helped para athletes perform at the highest level. Their achievements inspired fans and reinforced the message that inclusivity remains central to India's sporting future. India's image as a sporting destination also gained attention. Football icon Lionel Messi's visit drew global focus and highlighted the country's readiness to host major events.

As the year ends, Indian sport stands united, confident and ambitious, ready to build on momentum and aim higher on the world stage, carrying hope, belief and growing pride into the years ahead. The journey suggests sustained growth through planning, patience, unity and ambition nationwide

Gardner open to leading Australia if asked

NEW DELHI

Australian all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner has said she would be open to taking on the role of national team captain if she is asked in the future. While Gardner admitted she never imagined herself as Australia's captain, her recent leadership experience has made her more confident about the possibility.

Over the past year, Gardner has grown strongly as a leader, captaining teams across different T20 leagues around the world. She is set to travel to India at the start of the new year to once again lead the Gujarat Giants in the Women's Premier League. Last season, she took over the captaincy from fellow Australian Beth Mooney and guided the franchise to its first-ever playoff appearance.

Her leadership journey continued in England, where she captained the Trent Rockets in The Hundred after England skipper Natalie Sciver-Brunt stepped aside. Under Gardner's guidance, the Rockets finished in the top four. Later, she was appointed captain of the Sydney Sixers, replacing Ellyse Perry, for the upcoming Women's Big Bash League season.

Speaking to cricket.com.au, Gardner said she believes leadership is not only about having the captain's title. She explained that she has focused on leading through actions, especially within the spin bowling group, by sharing experience and ideas. Gardner added that cricket is an individual sport played within a team setup, making communication and teamwork very important.

As discussions continue about Australia's future captain after Alyssa Healy, several names have emerged. Young batter Phoebe Litchfield has been backed by former players, while vice-captain Tahlia McGrath remains a strong contender.

Smith reflects on short Boxing Day Test pitch

MELBOURNE

Australia's stand-in captain Steve Smith has shared his thoughts on the Melbourne Cricket Ground pitch after the Boxing Day Test ended unusually early, lasting only two days. England won the match by four wickets, sparking debate over the nature of the surface used for the high-profile Ashes clash.

The pitch came under heavy criticism after 36 wickets fell in just 142 overs, with the match completed in 952 deliveries. Smith suggested that the outcome might have been different if the grass on the pitch had been slightly shorter. According to him, the surface had around 10mm of grass, and even a reduction of 2mm could have balanced the contest better.

Smith said the wicket offered a lot more help to bowlers than expected. He added that while he is not a groundsman, the pitch appeared a little too lively. However, he also praised the MCG curator for producing good wickets over the past couple of years and said learning is always part of the process.

The MCG has faced criticism in the past for being too batter-friendly. During the 2017 Ashes Test at the venue, only 24 wickets fell across five days, leading to a "poor" rating from match officials. Smith noted that the pitch character has changed over recent years, now offering a better contest between bat and ball.

He also pointed out that modern batting styles are more aggressive, which affects how games unfold on challenging surfaces. England's Harry Brook and Australia's Travis Head were among the few batters who adapted well by playing positive cricket.

Fast bowler Mitchell Starc supported Smith's view, saying no one wants to watch a two-day Test match. He felt the grass was slightly too high and suggested a middle ground would create a more balanced and entertaining surface in future matches.

Pakistan drops senior stars for Sri Lanka T20s

LAHORE

Pakistan have announced a revamped squad for their upcoming three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka, leaving out several senior players including Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf. The quartet is currently featuring in Australia's Big Bash League, which overlaps with the series.

The Pakistan Cricket Board named a 15-member squad as part of preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup scheduled next year in India and Sri Lanka. Salman Ali Agha will continue as captain after leading the side in recent matches and becoming Pakistan's most capped T20I player this year.

One of the major talking points is the return of all-rounder Shadab Khan, who makes his comeback after undergoing shoulder surgery earlier this year. The 27-year-old has completed his rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy and is currently gaining match fitness in the Big Bash League.

The selectors have also handed a maiden call-up to wicketkeeper-batter Khawaja Nafay. The 23-year-old has impressed at domestic level and with the Pakistan Shaheens, scoring at a healthy strike rate in T20 cricket. His inclusion signals Pakistan's intent to test young talent ahead of the World Cup.

Pakistan will travel to Sri Lanka in the first week of January. All three matches will be played at the Rangiri Dambulla International Cricket Stadium on January 7, 9 and 11.

The series is seen as an important step in finalising Pakistan's World Cup squad.

Deepika Sehrawat sees brighter year ahead

NEW DELHI

Indian women's hockey drag-flicker Deepika Sehrawat believes the new year will bring renewed hope and momentum for the national team after a difficult and disappointing season. The 22-year-old forward said injuries, poor results and missed chances made the past year challenging, but she is confident that change is coming.

Deepika is set to return to competitive hockey with Delhi SG Pipers in the Women's Hockey India League after spending five months on the sidelines due to injury. She missed the Asia Cup in August after slipping during a practice session, a setback she described as one of the toughest moments of her career. Despite the frustration, she said the break has made her mentally and physically stronger.

The Indian team endured a tough season, finishing last in the FIH Pro League and suffering relegation. They also failed to secure direct qualification for the Women's World Cup after losing to China in the Asia Cup final. Off-field issues added to the turmoil, with head coach Harendra Singh stepping down following internal concerns.

Looking ahead, Deepika said World Cup qualification will be the team's first major challenge, followed by the Asian Games. India will compete in the World Cup qualifiers in Hyderabad in March, where only the top three teams will earn a spot in the tournament to be held in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Deepika stressed the need to correct repeated mistakes and improve communication within the team. She also highlighted the importance of mental fitness, crediting her league franchise for supporting her recovery. After training alone in Jaipur during rehabilitation, she has resumed drag-flicking and feels stronger than before.

Coming from a family of wrestlers, Deepika chose hockey against expectations. She now hopes the new year will allow her and the team to prove their potential and reclaim the momentum built after the Tokyo Olympics.

Pollard power sends MI Emirates into Qualifier

ABU DHABI

MI Emirates sealed a top-two finish in the ILT20 with a dominant eight-wicket victory over Dubai Capitals, confirming their place in Qualifier 1 after another all-round performance led by skipper Kieron Pollard.

After choosing to field, MI Emirates relied on their spinners to put the opposition under pressure. Allah Ghazanfar continued his fine form with three wickets for 28 runs, while experienced all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan bowled a tight spell of one for 11 in four overs. Their combined effort restricted Dubai Capitals to a modest 122 for eight.

The Capitals struggled to build momentum after early setbacks. Shakib removed opener Shayan Jahangir in the fourth over, and Ghazanfar followed by dismissing Sediqullah Atal. A run-out of Leus de Plooy and the wicket of Rovman Powell further hurt the innings. Jordan Cox was also trapped in front, leaving the Capitals five down for 53 and unable to recover.

Chasing a small target, MI Emirates started positively. Muhammad Waseem and Andre Fletcher added quick runs at the top, helping the team reach 59 for two at the halfway stage. From there, the chase remained firmly under control.

Pollard anchored the innings alongside Tom Banton before taking charge in emphatic fashion. The MI Emirates captain smashed 30 runs off a single over from Waqar Salamkheil, effectively ending the contest. Pollard remained unbeaten on 44 from 31 balls, striking one boundary and five towering sixes.

Nortje leads Sunrisers to record SA20 win

PAARL

Sunrisers Eastern Cape made a dream start to SA20 Season 4 with a dominant bonus-point victory over Paarl Royals at Boland Park, as visiting teams continued to rule the opening round of the tournament. The two-time champions delivered a complete performance, first posting a strong total and then bowling the hosts out for just 49, the lowest score ever recorded in SA20 history. The emphatic 137-run win also marked the first time Sunrisers Eastern Cape have won their opening match of a season.

Batting first, Sunrisers posted 186 for four, powered by an outstanding unbeaten knock from Jordan Hermann. The left-hander scored 62 not out from just 28 balls, striking five fours and four sixes. He finished the innings in style by smashing 22 runs off the final over.

Hermann was well supported at the top by Quinton de Kock, who made 42 from 24 balls, and Jonny Bairstow, who scored 31 off 33 deliveries. The pair added 66 runs quickly to set the tone. Matthew Breetzke then chipped in with 31, while Hermann continued to dominate as the innings progressed.

In reply, Paarl Royals never found momentum. The Sunrisers pace attack tore through the top order, leaving the home side struggling at 30 for four inside the powerplay.

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